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# ROBERT BURNS,

AND

# WALTER SCOTT:

## Two Lives,

BY

THE REV. JAMES WHITE,

AUTHOR OF

"THE LANDMARKS OF ENGLISH HISTORY," ETC.

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ROBERT BURNS

AND

SIR WALTER. SCOTT.







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ROBERT BURNS.

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**ROBERT BURNS.**



## ROBERT BURNS.

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1759—1796.

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EVERYBODY knows the name of Robert Burns, but, as in the case of many others, the name is nearly all that is known. He is a poet; no one is ignorant of that. A Scottish poet; that also is universally known. But by what means his poetic faculty was called forth, at what exact period he lived, how he was received in his own time, how his reputation has been preserved till now, and what are the constituents of his powers,—very few of us could answer minutely, if examined on these points.

There are excellent lives of Burns; some too ponderous for easy reference, others devoting themselves exclusively to the incidents of his career, and referring the reader for examples of his genius to separate portions of his works. Without pretending to rival either the completeness of the larger biographies, or the critical skill of the smaller, it is the object of the present little sketch to give a narrative of the poet's life, with a different view of some portions of his career from that which obtained a few years ago,

interspersing it with such specimens of his genius as will enable the reader both to know the man, and judge for himself of his merits as an author. Those who are already masters of his poems will not be unwilling to read short selections from them again. Those to whom they are new, will assuredly be grateful for the opportunity of making their acquaintance.

Many years ago, in the good old days of fast coaches and dusty roads, I was fortunate enough to sit on the box, next the well-known and highly respected Mr. Fawlkner, the driver of the "Rocket" from Portsmouth to London. When we were fairly in a trot, he began the conversation by telling us that "he and about forty others had been celebrating Bobby's birthday the night before." I inquired who "Bobby" was; and he said, "Burns, sir; Robert Burns the poet." And all the way through Petersfield, and all the way to Guildford, and all the way to Hatchett's, in Piccadilly, Mr. Fawlkner and I spoke, quoted, criticised, and admired Robert Burns. Now this is real fame. Here was an English coachman (who, by the by, never travelled without an edition of his favourite poet in the pocket of the coach) engaged with forty tradesmen, shipowners, and other gentlemen, in the far south, in the busy port of Portsmouth, doing honour to the memory of the most tho-

roughly national of all Scotch poets, nearly fifty years after his death, and not a Scotchman (for I asked the question) among them all. The natives of Scotland, he said, resident or visiting at Portsmouth, celebrated the event in a different hotel. I know nothing like this, except in the universal appreciation of Shakspeare; but perhaps that name will help us to the cause of this extra-national, this unlimited sympathy with Burns. Though he wrote in a provincial dialect, he appealed, like Shakspeare, to the universal heart. He described nature—the field, the flower, the river; enriching them with the emotions they excited in a warm and impulsive disposition; and who could be provincial in spirit, however local his language might be, when he struck upon the great chords that vibrate in every human bosom, telling of love, and hope, and youth, the sanctities of a quiet, religious home, as in the “Cotter’s Saturday Night,” the softening uses of adversity, as in his address to the mouse turned up by the plough? But the charm of Burns is different from that of Shakspeare in this respect, that while Shakspeare is so myriad-minded and so many-formed that he almost ceases to be an individual, there never was so true, so total, so entire a man as Burns. Never was a human being so strong in individual existence, giving us glimpses into a

real mind, and standing before us as clear, personal, and unmistakeable as the most intimate of our friends.

One day—it was the 25th of January, 1759—there raged a great storm over the valley of the Doon, in Ayrshire, and, among other evidences of its power, blew down the gable end of a rough, mud-walled cottage near the river, and put the inhabitants into great alarm. No wonder; for a baby had been born that day, and when the wall fell in, the mother and child had to be carried to the nearest hut, and there Robert Burns spent his first night. His father had been a gardener in one of the northern counties, and a year or two before this time had settled in the west, building the cottage with his own hands, and, renting a small piece of ground, had turned it into a nursery garden, and fought his way as well as he could. A venerable man, though working for his daily bread; a stern disciplinarian, and deep in all the mysteries of the theology of his persuasion, but softened and ennobled by a conscientiousness and affection which endeared him to his children, even when he held them most strictly under his authority. In addition to Robert of the stormy birth, his family soon consisted of two sons and three daughters; and the tenderer disposition of his wife worked its usual effect, and influenced

the family character far more powerfully than the stern and strong-minded father. From her and the nurse who helped her they heard endless songs and anecdotes ; the ballads of the haunted neighbourhood where they lived, and the wild traditions of the past. A haunted neighbourhood it was, for ghosts and goblins were nearly as common as geese. There were “brownies” to help the maids to clean up the parlour and keep alive the kitchen fire, and weird women and warlocks to promise power and fortune to their favourites ; but there were also “kelpies,” that lured the benighted traveller to the swollen ford, and drowned him in the flood, and witches, casting an evil eye on an enemy, till he pined, and sickened, and refused his food, and died without any apparent disease. Then there were ill-conditioned elves, that turned the milk sour, and got the dairymaid scolded or sent away ; and hideously ill-natured imps, who mislaid everything, so that the housewife never could find her keys when she wanted them ; who put everything in its wrong place—the farmer’s hat in the stable, the mistress’s stocking on the roof of the byre, and on one occasion ventured so far as to steal the minister’s sermon and supply its place with a pack of cards, so that when the worthy man mounted his pulpit to give out the text, he turned over the knave of clubs.

All these stories were repeated, and in the ductile heart of childhood implicitly received. So Robert grew up, surrounded by the super-earthly and uneanny. He saw lights in the darkest nights in the ruined windows of Alloway Kirk, hereafter to be immortalized and seen by many thousand eyes in the poem of "Tam o' Shanter." He heard voices in churchyards, which he afterwards recorded in a "Dialogue between Death and Dr. Hornbook." Nor, when he approached manhood, were other influences wanting. There were witches who worked with him in harvest time in cutting down the corn; but it was remarked that the witches on these occasions were generally very good-looking, and to ordinary eyes appeared country lasses about seventeen or eighteen years old. But witches or not, the days of gramarie were soon to end. After helping his father in the work of the small farm he held still "on the banks and braes o' bonnie Doon," and feeding his mind with a miscellaneous feast of all the books he could collect or borrow, he was sent to the neighbouring town of Irvine, to learn the trade of a flax-dresser, or, as he calls it, a "heckler." This was in 1781, and Robert was twenty-two years old. You would think perhaps that the son of parents so poor, condemned to such rustic and unintellectual employment, would write a poorish sort of

letter, with some faults perhaps in spelling, or a slip or two in grammar. Now here is, luckily preserved, the note he sent his father shortly after going to his new employment. Are such letters often sent from Oxford or Cambridge? Observe the style:—

HONOURED SIR,—I have purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on New Year's Day; but work comes so hard upon us that I do not choose to be absent on that account. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder, and on the whole I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees; the weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind, that I dare neither review past events nor look forward into futurity, for the least anxiety or perturbation in my breast produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when, for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I *glimmer* a little into futurity; but my principal, and, indeed, my only pleasurable employment, is looking backward and forward in a moral and religious way. I am quite transported at the thought that, ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasinesses, and disquietudes of this weary life. As for the world, I despair of ever making a figure in it; I am not formed for the bustle of the busy nor the flutter of the gay. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were but too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which, I hope, have been remembered ere it is yet too late.

This letter owes its desponding tone to the fits of mental depression to which the poetic temperament is peculiarly subject. It took its rise from no romantic disappointment with the lowliness of his position, or want of confidence in himself. Burns, without being a vain man, knew from the first that he was gifted with great and varied faculties. Already he had essayed them in rhymes, and, buoyed up by anticipations of fame and fortune, he offered an unappalled front to evils far more serious than his narrow wages and small lodging at Irvine, for we find him bating nor heart nor hope when his father, after being ruined in the farm of Lochlea, had died and left his family desolate, and a fire had burned to the ground the shop in which he was learning his trade. "I was left," he says, "like a true poet, not worth a sixpence." But, like a true poet, or true anything else, he gathered himself up for the battle of life, collected all that remained of the family property, and, in partnership with his brother Gilbert, and with the domestic management of his mother and sisters, he took the farm of Mossiel, near Mauchline, and felt more at home with the plaid on his shoulders and his hand on the plough than when boxed up in a workshop, and intent on carding the flax. It was while "vexing this niggard soil for scanty bread" that he first

became distinguished for his poetical powers. But to a wretched use we must confess he turned them at first. It was as the fiercest satirist of one of the parties which then divided the religious world of Ayrshire that he let loose his irreverent muse. Whether the worthy persons he attacked were right or wrong in the course they pursued (there is no doubt, at all events, that neither side kept within the bounds of what would now be thought legitimate controversy), nobody can find any excuse, even in their wit and cleverness, for the frightful personal lampoons with which the new tenant of Mossiel assaulted the rival camp. Their fame, however, though local, was great, and doubtless the practice thus gained encouraged him to nobler efforts; and high time it was—for he had now a wife and son to support, and the farm was scarcely sufficient for the addition. The Bonnie Jean of so many of his songs was the mother of his child, under the sanction of marriage lines (as a written promise is called), which constitute as true a matrimony in the civil courts of Scotland as any performed in the Church; but alas! Jean's father was a leading man among the ecclesiastical sect which his son-in-law had opposed, and, giving way to his anger, determined on the gratification of his revenge, even at the expense of his daughter's

reputation. He burned the “lines” proving and establishing the marriage, and tore his daughter from a wicked and unbelieving heathen who had turned into ridicule the leaders of the party he belonged to. Here was a real suffering. Burns forgot his wretched fields—his prospects of distress. The worst of evils had come upon him, and all day long he looked despairing to the sinking sun which he knew was setting upon the cottage where Jean was kept away from him. How little many of us think, when we read or listen to his song on this occasion, how bitter was the grief it sprang from, and how true the affection it expressed :—

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,  
I dearly like the west,  
For there the bonnie lassie lives,  
The lassie I lo'e best :  
There wild-woods grow, and rivers row,  
And mony a hill between ;  
But day and night my fancy's flight  
Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,  
I see her sweet and fair :  
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,  
I hear her charm the air :  
There's not a bonnie flower that springs  
By fountain, shaw, or green,  
There's not a bonnie bird that sings,  
But minds me o' my Jean.

O blaw ye westlin winds, blaw saft  
Amang the leafy trees,  
Wi' balmy gale, frae hill and dale  
Bring hame the laden bees ;  
And bring the lassie back to me  
That's aye sae neat and clean ;  
Ae smile o' her wad banish care,  
Sae charming is my Jean.

What sighs and vows amang the knowes  
Hae passed atween us twa !  
How fond to meet, how wae to part,  
That night she gaed awa !  
The powers aboon can only ken,  
To whom the heart is seen,  
That name can be sae dear to me  
As my sweet lovely Jean !

Whether his now disconsolate situation inspired him with poetic thoughts we cannot tell, but in two years he finished the poems which first spread his reputation beyond his native glens, and which from that hour to this have formed the solace, the pride, and the delight of every cottage in Scotland. Allan Cunningham tells us, in his delightful life of his brother bard, that the volume penetrated into quarters where such light literature had never ventured before. An old Cameronian divine gave a copy of it to Allan's father, and said, "Keep it out o' the way o' your children, lest ye find them, as I found mine, reading it on the Sabbath." The

Sabbath could certainly have been better employed than in reading those pages, but certainly, also, it could have been worse. The Puritanic feeling which at a darker period of Scottish history had been the mainspring and support of civil liberty, had by this time degenerated into a rigid asceticism, which cavilled at small departures from external decorum, but left the greater enormities of life and manners untouched. With a far greater appearance of sanctimoniousness than is practised at the present day was combined a larger amount of coarseness and immorality. The Covenanter, in his blue bonnet, with pistol in his belt and broadsword by his side, worshipping God in the wild fastnesses where the persecutor hardly ventured to follow, listening with grim satisfaction to the denunciations of some shrieking divine inculcating vengeance on the guilty disturbers of his devotions, this is a very different man from the Covenanting baker or grocer in a country town, still drawling through the nose, still raging with hatred against all who differed from him in doctrine, but mixing his flour with bones and alum, and sanding his sugar, as if he were a mere Erastian;—and therefore it is perhaps judging from a point of view not intended by the poet, when we deprecate as altogether wicked and indefensible the

attacks contained in his early poems on the “Unco Gude, or Rigidly Righteous.” There is nothing so contemptible as the assumption of a virtue where it does not exist; but the worst form of this hypocrisy is the persistence in the outward manifestation of a principle after the principle has disappeared. Even the Quaker’s hat is now falling into contempt, because it represents no longer what it was introduced to represent. The simplicity of apparel which was assumed by the Friends was intended to keep them from being noticed on account of their clothes; they therefore dressed in the common fashion of their time, without the recent importation of hats from Spain, or doublets from France; but the effect of their continued breadth of brim and wideness of tail is the very reverse of their first unostentatious adoption. The Puritans of the West, in the same way, had outlived the period of their rigid forms. They were the Don Quixotes of religion, and transplanted the feelings and manners of the days of Lauderdale and Claverhouse into the times of Edmund Burke and Charles James Fox. Burns accordingly laughed at them as anachronisms, as he would have laughed at the Spanish hidalgo in his suit of armour on Rosinante. But he had other sentiments excited besides those of laughter. His attack on individual preachers

we have already disapproved ; but can we wonder that a man smarting under the greatest calamity which can befall an affectionate heart—the cruel and needless separation from the object of its affection—allowed the circle of his indignation to extend from the cold-blooded elder who tore his daughter from his arms on a point of doctrine, till it embraced the whole principle from which such ferocious dogmatism sprang ? It is not unjust to call this rigidly righteous father a hypocrite —rather it is a compliment even to his views of religion to deny that such an action could be justified by its precepts, or that it called for the abnegation of all enjoyment, or the repression of the natural impulses of childhood, so that youth itself was but a long deceit, a painful imitation of the gravity of age, or that it condemned the devout admiration of the beauties of a landscape. Don't these people see that, by going round in a circle, they have become close followers of the very persons of whom they have the greatest horror—the voluntary sufferers of the Romish Church ; the shivering anchorite in his cave, the drivelling maniac on his pillar ? And what was the result on the manners of the peasantry or of the gentry at the time ? Alas ! Burns himself, who reveals the cause, serves also as an example of the effect. In the midst of all this false and hollow Puritanism raged a coarse-

ness and sensuality among the general body of the people which it is difficult to describe. Scotland at that period was a poor and thinly-peopled country. The disputed succession in 1745 had hindered the progress of wealth, and the foolish pride of the most barren and feudal of all the nations of Europe had prevented the gentry even of the second degree from entering into trade. In idle gentility, the younger brothers of the Laird were more dependent on him than his servants, and, in fact, performed the offices of his domestics, while they would have scorned to earn their bread by honest industry. This combination of pride and servility is what we see in the Scottish characters presented to us by the novelists and dramatic writers of the last century. But suddenly the prospects of the younger gentry brightened. India was thrown open to their exertions—India, where whole countries were to be conquered, and native kings subdued and pillaged. Commerce itself, in that golden land, was a monopoly requiring jobbery and interest to get a right to exercise it, and therefore was fitted for gentle blood. Away went half the junior aristocracy of Scotland: they were soldiers, writers, merchants; they were all three together, and fought and diplomatised, and bought and sold, and were grasping and cruel, and trampled on the native popu-

lations, and exacted great ransoms from prisoners they had no right to take, and came back to their own country in the hateful character of Nabob—tyrannical, blustering, and ostentatious, but distributing, by acquisitions of land, the riches they had so iniquitously acquired. This periodic return of Indian fortunes was beginning in the days of Burns; but the improvement had not yet reached the peasantry. There were no good roads, the first elements of civilization and wealth, except the great passages between town and town. Glasgow, in 1784, was a place of some forty thousand inhabitants, principally supported by a trade in slaves and sugar. Edinburgh was the capital of intellect and fashion, but very poor and very proud—a personification of the national character. There were small commercial dealings at Dundee and Aberdeen, and other places on the eastern coast, principally with Holland and the Baltic. The arts and sciences had not yet been applied to manufactures; women spun the flax at home; weavers wove it into webs in their own houses; hecklers, we have seen, carded the wool in company, but this was because the process required practice and skill, and combination expedited the work. Farms, whether large in size or not, were very low in rent: the finest lands in Roxburgh and Berwickshire let at sixteen shillings the Scotch

acre—there were no poor rates, and only nominal tithes—and were held by persons who availed themselves of their long leases to make large fortunes from the rise in prices consequent on the French war, and in many instances to buy out their landlords, who had no share in this increase of value. But the farmer of ordinary land was generally not much superior to the labourers he employed, either in capital or rank. They all ate together in the great kitchen, with the huge open chimney, and the wooden settle to keep off the draught of the door. Early in the morning they feasted on oatmeal porridge, or brose, accompanied either with jugs of sour milk, or a large lump of salt butter to give the mess a flavour. At dinner the same, with perhaps potatoes and greens, mashed up in the pot they were boiled in, flavoured with fat or butter, and supped in alternate mouthfuls out of wooden spoons. At supper, when the labours of the farm were over, vast were the basins, or rather tubs of “sowans” which smoked upon the board,—a thin, innutritious, but very palatable food, of which ploughman, herd, carter, and shepherd would ingurgitate such quantities as it is impossible to compute; and loaded with this, and after snoring through the prayer and chapter with which they were dismissed, they would retire to rest, leaving the more immediate family

to a social hour, seated on cozy benches on each side of the fire. Here, while the wife pursued her labours at the reel, and the daughters knitted stockings, the sons, if literary, would read portions of Allan Ramsay's poems, or Boston's "Fourfold State." And so to bed. A life of apparent innocence, and worthy of all commendation. Many there were, let us hope, who fulfilled this description, and among others the excellent father of Burns himself. But there is a drawback to the picture. The refinements of life were utterly unknown. Manners were corrupted and perverted to an incredible degree; the relations of the sexes on the most degrading and unsatisfactory footing; the language gross and debasing; and there can be no doubt, as I have heard old people say, that Burns' poems, even the worst of them, exercised a refining and purifying influence on the habits and feelings of the peasantry, and that the wonder of his works is not their inelegance, nor their profanity, nor their immodesty, but their exemption from all these faults, considering the associations of his early days, and the universal character of the time. It certainly was a great gain to exchange the coarseness and ribaldry of their ordinary talk, and the foul incidents of their favourite volumes, such as the "Adventures and Witty Sayings of George

Buchanan," for such true and yet idealized representations of rustic life as were set before them by one of their own sphere.

Even where he trenched closest on the reverence due to sacred things, the dullest were able to see that the design was not to ridicule or degrade the holy, but to rescue it from the accompaniments that weakened its influence. The poem called the "Holy Fair" is the finest specimen both of the poet's power of satire, and of the danger incurred by any one, however pure his intentions, when he ventures on subjects not fitted for the Comic Muse. It is like the Reformation carried on by Knox, where, in pulling down the ornaments of superstition, the walls of the main building were damaged; in displacing a Romish saint the altar itself was injured. But how are we to estimate a work but by its effects? How are we who live in these improved times to judge of the blows necessary to be administered either by Knox or Burns? How do we know whether it was possible with silken hands to outroot the old idolatry, or with honeyed lines to reprehend the howling denunciations of the pulpit and the gross excesses of the congregation? When this tremendous picture of themselves was presented to the persons principally concerned in these desecrations, in the midst of their smart and

suffering, there were not wanting voices to confess that the punishment was deserved. It was acknowledged that opportunity was taken of the great gathering for the celebration of the most solemn ceremony of the Church, first, by the preachers, for theatrical display, and then by the audience for love-making, drinking, scandal, and all other bad conduct, so that the religious observances were made subservient to the worst purposes. Who could be too severe on this? Who could view contentedly so great an evil? Good taste, if not religious feeling, was injured by these proceedings; and what has been the effect, not perhaps of these poetic castigations alone, but certainly in some degree of the vividness of their description and the notoriety they obtained? There is not a more beautiful sight in the world than the open-air sacrament of the Scotch kirk. From far and near the people assemble; the pulpit is removed into the church-yard, the congregation either stand in reverent attention, or sit orderly on the grass. The ministers of the neighbouring parishes officiate in turns. When the weather is fine, and the crowded people lift their hats at the prayer, or raise the psalm, how moving to the heart is the sight and sound! There is no need now for poetic objurgation. There is no tasteless striving after eloquence in the preacher, no riotous retire-

ment to public-houses among the congregation. All is solemn—all is calm. The bitterness of the “Holy Fair” has lost its pungency, and the verses can now only be looked upon as descriptive of a state of manners long happily passed away. It may even be read in this view by persons who would be repelled from it by its apparent irreverence, if they were ignorant of the state of society at the time. We can look on it now with as impartial feelings as on one of the satires of Juvenal, and the same indeed may be said of several of Burns’ works, which, when first produced, had the appearance of reckless insolence, but were in reality the outpourings of a virtuous indignation. For some time he was looked on in his own neighbourhood merely as a scorner of dignities, and he might have gone on, admired by the intelligent few, the terror and opprobrium of a narrow-minded sectarianism. But through the line of demarcation between Edinburgh and the provinces, the small book published at Kilmarnock forced its way. Pedantic scholars began comparing it with Horace and the rest, but soon forgot Horace and all the Romans in the freshness, the variety, the *Scotchness* of the new poet. It had hitherto been the fashion with Scottish authors, except Allan Ramsay and Robert Ferguson, to write in higher, purer, and better English,

as they believed, than the English themselves. Here was a man who handled the half-forgotten and altogether despised tongue of his country in so masterly a manner that humour, wisdom, tenderness, love, and patriotism seemed all to find in it their fittest and noblest expression ; and great whispers took place in the drawing-rooms of the capital—“ And the man is only a ploughman—the man was never at college, scarcely even at school ; the man is a dreadfully strong man, and thrashes his own oats with his own flail ; the man is a dreadfully wicked man, and his wife’s father has taken her away from him, and they say he drinks.”

What a series of discoveries for the petted, pouting, silly, and aristocratic circles in Edinburgh literary society !—especially that Burns drank. Oh ! but it was the quality of the drink they shuddered at, not the quantity. If he had reeled home speechless every night of the year, “ with claret and good capon lined,” they would not have had a word to say ; for did not the *élite* of the land do so?—were not noblemen staggering in the streets, and gentlemen brawling in taverns, and judges hiccuping on the bench ?—for was it not the wretched time of polite company, both in England and Scotland, when the most brutal excesses were no blot on the most exalted rank ? But Burns drank whisky—never, at

that time, beyond the bounds of moderation—whereas the chiefs of literature and fashion drank themselves into insensibility with the finest Bordeaux and the richest sherry. An immense difference this!—and in many things the principle of this distinction is not unknown at the present time. So the great Edinburgh authors, and talkers, and dancers, and flirters were delighted when they heard that the rustic puzzle had come up to the great city to arrange for a new edition of his poems. What amusement they anticipated from his awkward manners, and what superiority they expected to feel over the prodigiously strong man, who ploughed, and harrowed, and flailed, and drank whisky, and perhaps had never tasted claret in his life. But they met with a barbarian, says Allan Cunningham, who was not at all barbarous. “His air was easy and unperplexed; his address was perfectly well-bred and elegant in its simplicity; he felt neither eclipsed by the titled, nor struck dumb before the learned and the eloquent, but took his station with the ease and grace of one born to it. In the society of men alone he spoke out; he spared neither his wit, nor his humour, nor his sarcasm; he seemed to say to all, I am a man and you are no more, and why should I not act and speak like one? It was remarked, however, that he had not learned, or

did not desire, to conceal his emotions ; that he commended with more rapture than was courteous, and contradicted with more bluntness than was thought polite. It was thus with him in the company of men. When women approached, his look altered, his eye beamed milder ; all that was stern in his nature underwent a change, and he received them with deference, but with a consciousness that he could win their attention as he had won that of others who differed from them indeed only in the texture of their kirtles. This natural power of rendering himself acceptable to women had been observed and envied by Sillar, one of the dearest of his early comrades ; and it stood him in good stead now, when he was the object to whom the Duchess of Gordon —the loveliest as well as the wittiest of women —directed her discourse. Burns, she afterwards said, won the attention of the Edinburgh ladies by a deferential way of address—by an ease and natural grace of manners, as new as it was unexpected ; that he told them the stories of some of his tenderest songs or liveliest poems in a style quite magical, enriching his little narratives, which had, one and all, the merit of being short, with personal incidents of humour or of pathos."

When a duchess had said this of the ploughman, what more was to be said ? And when

the eyes of duchesses and beauties had filled with tears at the simple narrative of some of his early griefs, what more was wanted to his triumph as a man of society as well as a poet? In one of those glittering assemblages, where wealth and refinement spread themselves out before the unaccustomed eyes of the Ayrshire peasant, he began a description to a sympathetic few of the sad incidents of his attachment to Highland Mary. Gradually the circle widened, the music stopped, conversation in nooks and corners came to a close, and all gathered round the simple countryman; first they were interested with his description, then they entered into the hopes of happiness that were opening before him, and finally, fine ladies, and fine gentlemen too, perhaps, were melted into tears when they heard the melancholy ending. Highland Mary was a beautiful girl, to whom he became attached at a very early period. He was poor, and she had only her half-year's fee, for she was in the condition of a servant; but thoughts of gear never darkened their dream; they resolved to wed, and exchanged vows of constancy and love. Young people are romantic, but not the less sincere on that account. They plighted their vows on the Sabbath, to make them more sacred; they made them by a burn where they had courted, that open Nature might be a wit-

ness; they made them over an open Bible, to show the solemnity of their thoughts in this mutual act; and when they had done, they both took water in their hands and scattered it in the air, to intimate that as the stream was pure, so were their intentions. They parted when they did this; but they never met again. She died in a burning fever, during a visit to her relations to prepare for her marriage; and all that he had of her was a lock of her long bright hair and her Bible, which she exchanged for his.

Now let us see what uses he turned this incident to in the education of his poetic power. Long after this, the anniversary of his loss was a day of gloom, and the lines now quoted give the finishing stroke to the delicate narrative of his sweetheart's death. It is addressed to "Mary in Heaven":—

Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,  
That lov'st to greet the early morn,  
Again thou usherest in the day  
My Mary from my soul was torn.  
O Mary! dear departed shade!  
Where is thy place of blissful rest?  
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?  
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?  
  
That sacred hour can I forget,  
Can I forget the hallowed grove,  
Where by the winding Ayr we met,  
To live one day of parting love!

Eternity cannot efface  
Those records dear of transports past ;  
Thy image at our last embrace ;  
Ah ! little thought we 'twas our last !

Ayr, gurgling, kiss'd his pebbled shore,  
O'erhung with wild woods, thick'ning green ;  
The fragrant birch, and hawthorn hoar,  
Twin'd am'rous round the raptur'd scene ;  
The flow'rs sprang wanton to be prest,  
The birds sang love on every spray—  
Till too, too soon, the glowing west  
Proclaim'd the speed of winged day.

Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,  
And fondly broods with miser care !  
Time but th' impression stronger makes,  
As streams their channels deeper wear.  
My Mary, dear departed shade !  
Where is thy place of blissful rest ?  
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid ?  
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?

We are now getting to perceive that the Muse will admit no vile companions in the heart where she fixes her seat. Poetry, depend upon it, is a purifying power in spite of its occasional waywardness ; and if Burns forgot these noble influences sometimes, we are to look for his excuse to the peculiarities of his position. There he was—the idol for a time of the highest circles in his native land, recognised as an honour to his country, his words sounding in all dwell-

ings, whether hut or palace—his name a common possession among all classes—his speeches repeated, his features painted,—and his pockets as empty, and his prospects as dark as ever! Nay, emptier and darker; for the farm of Mossiel was a failure; the subscriptions to his poems came slowly and inadequately in; and if, in the first glow of his success, he hoped that his honourable, his right honourable, his learned and reverend patrons would do anything more for him, he added one other name to the long list of disappointed men of genius who find the difference between praise and help—who are admired, as Horace said long ago, and neglected. So his mind got embittered by the contemplation of his friends' words and actions. He broke out into epigram and satire, instead of boozing and biding his time; he sneered at scholars who had nothing but scholarship to boast of, as at Elphinstone's translation of Martial, a Latin poet—

Oh thou whom Poesy abhors,  
Whom Prose has turned out of doors,  
Heard'st thou that groan? proceed no further,  
'Twas laurell'd Martial roaring murther;

at nobles whose literary taste was limited to the outside of their books;—he found a copy of Shakspeare, magnificently bound, dirty and worm-eaten; this was his revenge:—

Through and through the inspirèd leaves,  
 Ye maggots, make your windings ;  
 But oh ! respect his lordship's taste,  
 And spare his golden bindings.

at meanness, wherever he found it, as in the case of a proud lady, whom he calls, from the name of her estate, Queen Netherplace—

One Queen Artemisia, as old stories tell,  
 When deprived of the husband she loved so well,  
 In respect of the love and affection he'd show'd her,  
 She reduced him to dust, and she drank up the powder ;  
 But Queen Netherplace, of a different complexion,  
 When called on to order the funeral direction,  
 Would have eat her dear lord on a slender pretence,  
 Not to shew her respect, but to save the expense !—

at wickedness and want of charity, as in the case of a wretched being whom he calls “Wat” :—

Sic a reptile was Wat, sic a miscreant slave,  
 That the worms were disgusted when laid in his grave ;  
 “ In his flesh there's a famine,” a starv'd reptile cries,  
 “ And his heart is rank poison,” another replies.

Now, as the world contains a very considerable number of mean men, and unkind men, and pretentious men, it is not to be wondered at that Burns, by declaring such war on meanness, and unkindness, and pretension, made a great many enemies. People were astonished to find that the person they thought they were patronizing had not only an opinion of his own, but a tremendous

trumpet through which to make it known. It chanced one day, during this memorable visit to Edinburgh, that Burns was in the house of Professor Fergusson, where several of the literary dons of the day were assembled, and among them, sitting bashful in a corner, a tall young lad, who laboured under a slight lameness of one of his feet, and attracted the poet's notice by the extraordinary sagacity of his look. There was a print on the wall of a soldier lying dead on the snow, with his faithful dog beside him, together with his wife and child. Burns was affected by the desolation of the scene even to tears. Some lines were written under the print which he did not know, and asked where they came from. Nobody could tell; but the boy timidly whispered to a friend that they were from a neglected poem of Langhorne's, called the "Justice of Peace." Burns rewarded him with a look and a word which he never forgot. This boy of the amazing memory was Walter Scott. The man of twenty-seven could of course have nothing in common with the boy of fifteen, but it is pleasant to know that there was even this slight link of connexion between the bard of the people and the minstrel of the aristocracy. This is the description he gives of Burns' appearance at the climax of his fame:—

His person was strong and robust, his manners rustic, not clownish—a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect, perhaps, from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Nasmyth's picture, but to me it conveys an idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of its portraits. I would have taken the poet, had I not known who he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school; *i.e.*, none of your modern agriculturists, who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce gudeman* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, and glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men in my time. His conversation expressed the most perfect self-confidence without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted, nor did I ever see him again except in the street, when he did not recognise me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh, but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day), the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

Trifling! They were so trifling that the patronage ostentatiously died off into unmeaning pro-

testations and mean excuses ; and the result of his acquaintance with the high life of the capital was, that he retired to his native county almost as poor as before, sickened and disappointed. The emolument from his poems barely sufficed to stock another farm in Ayrshire, of the name of Ellisland, which, however, was made more agreeable to him by the neighbourhood of several gentlemen of cultivated minds and generous dispositions. Riddel, of Friar's Carse, and Miller, of Dalswinton, and Syme, of Ryedale, are still known and honoured for their attachment to the poet ; and ladies of station and talent were honoured by his correspondence. But farming seems a poor speculation unless supported by skill and wealth. Burns may have had skill, but it was merely the mechanic skill of holding the plough or guiding the harrow ; and wealth he had none. Yet he fought a gallant fight with sterile land and deficient harvests. He published songs in the *Museum*, a periodical of the time for the preservation of Scotch music, and joined Mr. Thomson in his great and ultimately successful work, the “Collection of Scottish Airs.” But these are but the embroidery, not the cloth ; and Ellisland was a losing concern. At the end of the third year he resigned the lease, and what did he do now to support his wife and family ? He had been made an excise-

man a short time before this, and henceforth had no higher occupation than to look after private stills, and do his duty to the revenue. What the opinion of his brother excisemen may have been of the dignity of their occupation we have no means of judging, but Burns astonished them, at one of their convivial meetings, by stating what the sentiments of the public were on the merits of the fraternity, and burst forth into the following song :—

The deil cam' fiddling through the town,  
 And danced awa wi' the Exciseman,  
 And ilka wife cries—"Auld Mahoun,  
 I wish you luck o' the prize, man!"  
 The deil's awa, the deil's awa,  
 The deil's awa wi' the Exciseman ;  
 He's danc'd awa, he's danc'd awa,  
 He's danc'd awa wi' the Exciseman !

We'll mak our maut, we'll brew our drink,  
 We'll dance, and sing, and rejoice, man ;  
 And mony braw thanks to the meikle black deil  
 That danc'd awa wi' the Exciseman.

There's threesome reels, there's foursome reels,  
 There's hornpipes and strathspeys, man ;  
 But the ae best dance e'er cam to the land  
 Was—the deil's awa' wi' the Exciseman.  
 The deil's awa, the deil's awa,  
 The deil's awa wi' the Exciseman :  
 He's danc'd awa, he's danc'd awa,  
 He's danc'd awa wi' the Exciseman.

An extempore also on receiving his appointment is very characteristic :—

Searching auld wives' barrels,  
Och—hon! the day!  
That clarty barm should stain my laurels;  
But—what'll ye say?  
These movin' things ca'd wives and weans  
Wad move the very hearts o' stanes!

It will be seen from this that he was not much pleased with the office, and great accusations have been made against the Government of the day for condemning the greatest poet of his country to one of its most unpleasant employments. Many bitter words have been said on this subject, and there were few who in the days of their youth did not feel indignant at the degradation. But 1789 had not exactly the feelings of 1856, either with regard to Burns or other things. The dreadful upheaving of all constituted authorities and recognised positions was just beginning in France. There was a wide spirit of disaffection at home; and no wonder, for there was such cruelty, such narrowness, and such blindness in the Government, that, on reading the state of public affairs at that time, it seems marvellous that we escaped the horrors of as bloody a revolution as our neighbours. The wisest of our statesmen saw little chance of avoiding a universal disruption of society, a reign

of terror, a state of anarchy, to be followed by a relentless military despotism. All this was clearly prophesied as the unfailing circle of forcible and violent changes of constitution; and every day showed the truth of these forebodings by the frightful scenes which were enacted in the most civilized nation in Europe. Burns had, unfortunately, the reputation of uniting in his own person the two wildest extremes of opposition to the English Government; being by hereditary and poetic feeling a Jacobite, and, earnest in his regrets for the exiled Stuarts, and by his honest indignation at some defects in the administration, an earnest advocate for reform. In neither of those views was he in dangerous earnest, for when the trial came, he showed himself as patriotic and conservative as the best. But the time in 1789 had not come. He had been active and open in what then passed for treasonable hopes, and had drunk some dangerous and inflammatory toasts. These circumstances are sufficient to account for the slender patronage the Ministry of the day thought it right to extend to him; and perhaps they are even to be applauded for taking no official notice of his proceedings. What could they have done for so hostile a politician, whatever they may have wished to do for so admirable a writer? What post was open to

him? Could they have made him Commissioner of Excise, when he had declared himself opposed to their ordinary authority? The country itself would have been alarmed if it had seen power and influence put into the hands of a man who had professed sympathy with the demagogues of France. If there had at that time been a fund for pensioning distinguished authors, it is perfectly clear that Burns would not have accepted a penny; not that it would have been wrong, for no money can be so amply earned as that which a nation pays to men who have instructed or delighted it, but the principle of this reciprocal right and duty was not then understood. The recipient of a pension would have appeared to Burns a purchased slave; it would have appeared the wages of corruption, not the reward of merit; and he would have preferred his honest income from the rummaging of barrels and ferreting of smugglers to the gilded trappings of what he would have considered a dishonourable dependence. But, gauger as he was, the Muse did not disdain his company. It may be doubted, indeed, whether she would have presented herself so often if he had sate in an easy chair, counting over the gains of some golden sinecure. But other sources of inspiration were, unfortunately, as frequent with him as the Muse. To drown care, as it is

called, he assembled round him the more jovial spirits of the district, and paid the dreadful penalty of being the pleasantest of companions, by being continually pressed into company. This is always the greatest danger of a man of entertaining powers and social disposition. His inner brightness is called forth, and his fire wasted by the perpetual blaze; and worse, individually, than this,—the very brilliancy of his words reveals the darkness of his haunts. Many dull, unfanciful, and silent topers have drunk quantities,—without a syllable passing their sodden lips, and therefore without detection as without enjoyment,—which would have set Burns' tongue in motion, and his heart in flames; and he would have poured forth wit, lampoon, and ballad in endless profusion, so that the memory of his excess was as sure of immortality as the beauty of his language, and, like the lady fantastically described by Moore, he “moved in light of his own making.” Let us always remember this, when we hear of the debauches of Burns. Thousands of the persons who turned up their eyes in horror at his behaviour, behaved far worse, only nobody took any notice whether they behaved worse or better. It was the age of bacchanalian licence. Only here was a man who called attention to the fact of his frequent indulgences by marking each of

them with some imperishable memorial. It is quite right in us to lament the truthfulness of these accusations; but for the whisky-bibbing, dram-drinking, toddy-soaking hypocrites of Dumfries and Edinburgh, in 1793, to shudder at Robert Burns, is simply disgusting. Nobody lectured small defaulters with such prodigious gravity as Sir John Dean Paul; and who was such a judge of refinement, and propriety, and politeness, as Miss Caroline Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs? However, it is an old device of detected pickpockets to cry out, "Stop thief;" and so, reducing Burns's iniquities to their true dimensions, what do we find? That he had £70 a year, and a numerous family to keep; that he had had high expectations, which were deceived; that he had the noblest and most impulsive of dispositions, which for a while carried him into wilder declamations against the rich and powerful than he intended; that under the influence of poverty, despondency, disappointment, and discontent, he occasionally fled for refuge to the comforts of the bottle. But let his detractors answer this—Did he neglect his duty? did he neglect his wife? did he neglect his children? did he deceive his friends? did he contract a debt? did he fawn or feign? did he desert his country? did he scorn religious hopes? No! Then who are we, to vilify this

man? Shouldn't we pity, lament, and regret? But, as to holding up our heads, and curling the corners of our lips, and thinking loftily, and even thanking God that we are immensely respectable Pharisees, let it be far from us!

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone  
 Decidedly can try us;  
 He knows each chord—its varying tone,  
 Each spring—its varying bias:  
 Then at the balance let's be mute,  
 We never can adjust it;  
 What's *done* we partly may compute,  
 But know not what's *resisted*.

There were accusations not of this nature only, but of hatred of his country—Burns, who wrote “Scots wha hae;” of a desire to submit to revolutionary France!—Burns, who wrote “Should haughty Gaul invasion threat;” of a wish to get foreign aid to mend our constitution—Burns who wrote—

The kettle o' the kirk and state  
 Perhaps a clout may fail in't;  
 But deil a foreign tinker loon  
 Shall ever ca' a nail in't.  
 Be Britons still to Britons true  
 Among ourselves united;  
 For never but by British hands  
 Shall Britain's wrongs be righted!

What could such a man say in answer to such accusations? and very dangerous accusations at

that time they were. Men both in England and Scotland were tried and transported for saying they thought a reform in Parliament desirable, and drinking “The People.” Armed with a little brief authority, down came letters from Inspectors of the Excise, cautioning him that he was neither to see nor hear, his business being to watch public-houses, but by no means to attend to public affairs. This to Burns, the most independent of men, one of whose earliest aspirations was—

Thy spirit, independence, let me share,  
Lord of the lion heart and eagle eye!

What reply was possible to all this? It strikes me, the only reply possible was the one he gave—he died. Illness came upon him; friends—some, at least, terrified by the double cloud that darkened over his name, of loose living and Republican principles—hung back; his chiefs diminished his salary, when he could not do the full duties of his post, and resisted applications made in his favour to continue the paltry stipend for the short time he had to live. They declined; but honour to the young man who was appointed to take his place, for he did the work and refused the salary. His name was Stobie, a cognomen, as far as I know, not to be found in the peerage, but written henceforth in a higher list of nobility,

where the patent of their creation, as Burns expressed it, is held immediately from heaven. Fears of arrest—I wish we could call them visionary—haunted him on his dying bed, for a person threatened legal proceedings for the cloth of which his volunteer regimentals were made, and few were the friends to whom he could have recourse. Yet some there were—ladies first—

Oh woman ! in our hours of ease, uncertain, coy, and hard  
to please,

\* \* \* \* \*

When pain and anguish wring the brow, a ministering  
angel thou !

Mrs. Riddel, of Glen Riddel, visited him in his illness. “The stamp of death was on his features,” she says, “but his eye had not lost its light, nor the mind its strength.” Then there was the beautiful and kind Jessy Lewars, the heroine of many of his songs, who came like a sun-beam into the darkened dwelling, and took care of the bairns, and soothed the wife, and attended to the couch of pain. Syme and M‘Murdo commended him to the care of a benevolent physician ; and when I put the epithet “benevolent” to the word physician, I feel that it is tautology. It is the noblest profession under the sun, and seems to depend for its success as much on the finer qualities of the heart as on the faculties of the head. But what could the benevolence

and skill of the excellent Dr. Maxwell do? There were struggling thoughts tearing that poor frame to pieces. His wife expected her confinement every day; there were four helpless children; there was poverty all round and in front—and what could medicine avail?

Can'st thou not minister to a mind diseased,  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Purge the stuff'd bosom of the perilous stuff  
That weighs upon the heart?

At that moment there was not a cottage in Scotland where there was not a copy of his poems. Country lasses in all the Lowland counties could sing his beautiful ballads; and fine ladies, perhaps, while that great struggle was going on in the cheerless chamber at Dumfries, were bending over harps or pianos, and enchanting old and young with "Auld Rob Morris," or "Lassie o' the Lint-white Locks." If he thought of this at all, it could only be with gratification at the reflection that he had been the diffuser of so much innocent enjoyment. But the contrast was great between the poet, the delight of hamlet and hall, and the poor exhausted excise-man, "drawing his breath in this harsh world with pain," thanking and immortalizing Jessie Lewars with his last song, and writing his last

note of gratitude to Mrs. Dunlop. "Your friendship, with which for many years you honoured me, was a friendship dearest to my soul, your conversation and your correspondence were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal ! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart. Farewell." That heart was now soon to cease its beating, and on the 21st of July, 1796, having lived a little more than seven-and-thirty years, in darkness and penury, his eye closed for ever. There let him lie, the man of strong passions, of social indulgence, and occasionally of evil life, to be a warning to such as think that genius carries an excuse for breaches of the moral law, and perhaps indemnity against the fearful retribution which ill-regulated desires are certain to entail. His genius and his life were quite distinct. His excesses, such as I have described them, did not depend upon his genius, for we may learn by every day's experience that it is possible to break almost all the commandments without a spark of talent; and the example of Walter Scott, of Tennyson, and of Wordsworth will suffice to show us that genius in its highest development is perfectly consistent with the most blameless conduct. Therefore it is that, while neither denying nor extenuating the faults of Burns as

a man, it is safe—and certainly it is delightful—to turn to his intellectual qualities, and look upon him as the possessor of marvellous gifts, of purest fancies, and, in spite of all that has been said against him, of many virtues. Is love of country a virtue? Is constancy in friendship a virtue? Is indignation at injustice a virtue? Nay, is love to wife and child a virtue? In all these qualities he was as strong as the most immaculate of men. He was, indeed, a bad accountant—probably a bad flax-dresser, a bad farmer, and it is difficult to believe, in spite of the testimonials of his superiors, that he was a good exciseman. But he need not be a bad man for all these drawbacks. A man may be a good father, a true friend, a warm patriot, though ignorant of Cocker's arithmetic, and the routine of crops, and the mysteries of small stills and concealed hoards of malt. On these points the decision is of no great consequence; but of this we are quite sure, that, whether farming was ill-managed, or flax ill-carded, or whisky manufactures ill hunted out, he was not a bad poet, and it is with him in that character we have now to do. It seemed, indeed, as if the moment the man died the poet came into stronger life; for instantly the sympathies of the nation were roused, when it was too late. The old epigram came once more into play—

The poet's fate is here in emblem shown ;  
He asked for bread, and he received a stone.

There was a public funeral of the author of the “Cotter’s Saturday Night,” though the little room in the Vennel was deserted when it was occupied by the living man. Many years ago, whoever visited Dumfries made it a point to be introduced to the widow of Robert Burns. With what interest they looked in the face of the bonny Jean of other days ! The writer of these pages now only remembers that she was a kind, pleasant-looking old lady, whose conversation was chiefly about her husband, and this was all he wished. The voice was very sweet, even in ordinary talk, and as the poet was no practical musician himself, he used to make his wife try over all his words to the tunes they were written for, and judged, according as they adapted themselves to her pure and natural style, whether they required alteration or not. But the proud wife had reason to be as proud a mother. Three of her sons are still alive ; two of them of colonel’s rank in the India Company’s service, and it is often said by those who have had the pleasure of meeting them, that there is no greater treat than to hear the sons of Burns talking about their father, and one of them, who inherits his mother’s music, singing his father’s songs. Enthusiasm, in fact, became

universal, as soon as assistance was no longer required. People could now applaud with generosity and economy combined, for the very act of clapping their hands so heartily prevented them from putting them into their pockets. As fame grew, respect to the dead increased. He was lifted from his originally humble grave, and placed within a splendid monument; and the zeal of cheap admiration carried some of his countrymen into what to ordinary eyes appears profanation. They stole into the tomb, broke open the coffin, and carried away the head, to have a cast of it to place upon their library tables. They were disciples of a new theory called phrenology, by which the shape and indentations of a skull show the mental power, and they were anxious to see to how many bumps the songs and ballads were due. When the plaster mould was finished, the sacrilege was compounded for by the transmission of the head in an elegant wooden box, and science had obtained the gratification of its curiosity and the contempt and execration of mankind.

Here, then, we have followed this extraordinary man throughout his short career, from the cradle to the grave, and it is time to proceed to a criticism of the works which have made him so illustrious. But criticism on Burns would be something like a criticism on the

sweetness of the rose, or the song of the mavis. His verses were not composed according to any rules, and are not intended to be *judged*; they must be felt. When the great Sir Joshua Reynolds, the painter, heard some young connoisseurs going through the parrot-like routine of great names in the art—

When they talked of their Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff,  
He shifted his trumpet, and only took snuff,—

and in the same manner there would be a considerable pocketing of trumpets and tapping of lids, if I began any pedantic disquisition on styles of poetry, qualities of verse, and correctness of metaphor, with reference to Robert Burns. Why, what would people have? We all know he's not the least like Pope; that the "Twa Dogs" has not the slightest resemblance to Spencer's "Fairy Queen;" and that "Duncan Gray" can never be mistaken for "Paradise Lost." In fact, I am happy to say, he is remarkably unclassical, very often incorrect, both in rhyme and grammar, occasionally breaks down in a comparison, and that in choice of subjects he is as low and ungenteel as can possibly be. He actually celebrates the vulgar enjoyments of a set of beggars, met to spend in merriment the result of their fictitious illnesses and melancholy impositions on the charity of

the humane. He writes a poem on a small animal, so dreadfully vulgar that it is never even mentioned in polite society—a nasty, creeping, disgusting reptile, which appeared one day on a lady's bonnet at church. He wrote another poem on a wretched little mouse turned up by a plough, whereas it is evident he ought only to have written about lions and elephants; and altogether, when we examine his performances through the golden spectacles of Almack's and high life, we wonder the man has attained any reputation at all. Alas! that Parnassus is not covered with Turkey carpets, and the fount of Helicon composed of Eau de Cologne! But, perhaps, it is only with "hecklers" and farmers like himself that he is popular—hobnailed fellows who would wear holes in the Turkey carpet, and never perceive the scented Helicon, though held in gobletfuls under their nose? Let us leave them with their congenial poet, and shut him out of our boudoirs and drawing-rooms. But every drawing-room in England would be darkened if Burns was shut out; every library would feel a positive want, if that vulgar person's dirty little volume was excluded. And why is this? All our criticism is contained in the simple answer—The man was natural. The man had a soul. Without this, all the refinement in the world, and all the correctness, and

all the poetry are of no use—we stand unmoved amidst a cannonade of simile and trope; but *with* this, there is nothing with which we cannot sympathize. There is nothing vulgar or revolting when ennobled by a true and sensitive heart. As to lowness,—that amazing weapon in the armoury of fools,—what is there low in the admiration a peasant breathes out to his sweet-heart?—in the description of an honest labourer's cottage, with “the big ha' Bible, aince his father's pride,” placed reverently on the table?—or even in animated pictures of the sports of “Halloween” and the jovialities of “Souter Johnnie?” Our esteemed and celebrated friend, Jeames Plush, Esq., may call these things “low,” and express his contempt for them to Mary Hann; but we, who are not gifted with integuments of purple velvet, come to a very different decision. We tell *our* Mary Hanns that there is something so purifying in warm and real affection, that there is nothing low in the strains where such feelings are expressed; nay, that there is something elevating to humanity itself in the sincerity and simplicity of those rustic songs—that rank, station, wealth, learning, all sink into the shade when the one great string is struck. “One touch of nature makes the whole world kin!” And this was the power of Robert Burns. If I were quite sure my friend Mr. Plush was fairly

out of hearing, I would quote in proof of this a frightfully vulgar-looking story—but which isn't vulgar in the slightest degree—which, though it is only about tippling shoemakers and whisky-loving farmers, is as free from “lowness” as if it were about sporting dukes and right honourable members of the Cabinet. It is the tale of “Tam o' Shanter,” and his encounter with the witches:—

When chapman billies leave the street,  
And drouthy neebors, neebors meet,  
As market-days are wearing late,  
An' folk begin to tak' the gate ;  
While we sit bousing at the nappy,  
An' gettin' fou and unco happy,  
We think na on the lang Scots miles,  
The mosses, waters, slaps, and stiles,  
That lie between us and our hame,  
Where sits our sulky sullen dame,  
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,  
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.  
This truth fand honest Tam o' Shanter,  
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter,  
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,  
For honest men and bonny lasses.)  
O Tam ! hadst thou but been sae wise,  
As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's advice !  
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,  
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum ;  
That frae November till October,  
Ae market-day thou wasna sober ;  
That ilka melder, wi' the miller,  
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller ;

That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,  
 The smith and thee gat roaring fou on ;  
 She prophesy'd, that late or soon,  
 Thou wou'd be found deep drown'd in Doon ;  
 Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,  
 By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames ; it gars me greet,  
 To think how mony counsels sweet,  
 How mony lengthen'd sage advices,  
 The husband frae the wife despises !

But to our tale :—Ae market night,  
 Tam had got planted unco right ;  
 Fast by an ingle bleezing finely,  
 Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely ;  
 And at his elbow, Souter Johnny,  
 His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony ;  
 Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither ;  
 They had been fou' for weeks thegither !  
 The night drove on wi' sangs an' clatter ;  
 And ay the ale was growing better :  
 The Souter tauld his queerest stories ;  
 The landlord's laugh was ready chorus :  
 The storm without might rair and rustle—  
 Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,  
 E'en drown'd himself among the nappy :  
 As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,  
 The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure :  
 Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,  
 O'er a' the ills o' life victorious.

But pleasures are like poppies spread,  
 You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed ;

Or like the snow falls in the river,  
A moment white—then melts for ever ;  
Or like the borealis race,  
That flit ere you can point their place ;  
Or like the rainbow's lovely form  
Evanishing amid the storm.  
Nae man can tether time or tide ;  
The hour approaches Tam maun ride ;  
That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,  
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in ;  
And sic a night he taks the road in  
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last ;  
The rattling show'rs rose on the blast ;  
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd ;  
Loud, deep, and lang the thunder bellow'd :  
That night, a child might understand,  
The de'il had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his grey mare, Meg,  
A better never lifted leg,  
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,  
Despising wind, and rain, and fire ;  
Whiles holding fast his guid blue bonnet ;  
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet  
Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,  
Lest bogles catch him unawares :  
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,  
Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry.—

By this time he was cross the ford,  
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd ;  
And past the birks and meikle stane,  
Where drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane ;

And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,  
 Where hunters fand the murder'd bairn ;  
 And near the thorn, aboon the well,  
 Where Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.  
 Before him Doon pours all his floods ;  
 The doubling storm roars thro' the woods ;  
 The lightnings flash from pole to pole ;  
 Near and more near the thunders roll ;  
 When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,  
 Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a breeze ;  
 Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing ;  
 And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn !  
 What dangers thou canst make us scorn !  
 Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil ;  
 Wi' usquabae we'll face the devil !—  
 The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,  
 Fair play, he car'd nae deils a boddle.  
 But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,  
 Till by the heel and hand admonish'd,  
 She ventur'd forward on the light !  
 And wow ! Tam saw an unco sight !  
 Warlocks and witches in a dance ;  
 Nae cotillion brent new frae France,  
 But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,  
 Put life and mettle in their heels :  
 A winnock-bunker in the east,  
 There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast ;  
 A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,  
 To gie them music was his charge :  
 He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,  
 Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.—  
 Coffins stood round, like open presses ;  
 That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses ;

And by some devilish cantrip slight  
Each in its cauld hand held a light—  
By which heroic Tam was able  
To note upon the haly table,  
A murderer's banes in gibbet airns ;  
Twa span-lang, wee unchristen'd bairns ;  
A thief, new-cutted frae a rape,  
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape ;  
Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red-rusted ;  
Five scimitars, wi' murder crusted ;  
A garter, which a babe had strangled ;  
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,  
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,  
The gray hairs yet stack to the heft :  
Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',  
Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowl'd, amaz'd and curious,  
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious :  
The piper loud and louder blew ;  
The dancers quick and quicker flew ;  
They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,  
'Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,  
And coost her duddies to the wark,  
And linkit at it in her sark !

Now Tam, O Tam ! had thae been queans  
A' plump and strapping, in their teens ;  
Their sarks instead o' creeshie flannen,  
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen ;  
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,  
That ance were plush, o' gnid blue hair,  
I wad hae gi'en them aff my hurdies,  
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies !

But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,  
 Rigwoodie hags, wad spean a foal,  
 Lowping an' flinging on a cummock,  
 I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

But Tam kenn'd what was what fu' brawlie,  
 There was ae winsome lass and walie,  
 That night enlisted in the core,  
 (Lang after kenn'd on Carrick shore ;  
 For mony a beast to dead she shot  
 And perish'd mony a bonnie boat,  
 And shook baith meikle corn and bear,  
 And kept the country-side in fear),  
 Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn,  
 That while a lassie she had worn  
 In longitude tho' sorely scanty,  
 It was her best, and she was vauntie—  
 Ah ! little kenn'd thy reverend grannie,  
 That sark she coft for her wee Nannie,  
 Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches),  
 Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches !

But here my muse her wing maun cour,  
 Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r ;  
 To sing how Nannie lap and flang,  
 (A souple jade she was and strang,)  
 And how Tam stood, like ane bewitch'd,  
 And thought his very een enrich'd ;  
 Even Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain,  
 And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main :  
 'Till first ae-caper, syne anither,  
 Tam tint his reason a' thegither,  
 And roars out, " Weel done, Cutty-sark !"  
 And in an instant all was dark :  
 And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,  
 When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,  
When plundering herds assail their byke ;  
As open pussie's mortal foes,  
When, pop ! she starts before their nose ;  
As eager runs the market-crowd,  
When "Catch the thief!" resounds aloud ;  
So Maggie runs, the witches follow,  
Wi' mony an eldrritch screech and hollow.

Ah, Tam ! ah, Tam ! thou'll get thy fairin' !  
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin' !  
In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin' !  
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman !  
Now do thy speedy utmost, Meg,  
And win the key-stane of the brig ;  
There at them thou thy tail may toss,  
A running stream they darena cross !  
But ere the key-stane she could make,  
The fient a tail she had to shake !  
For Nannie, far before the rest,  
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,  
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle ;  
But little wist she Maggie's mettle—  
Ae spring brought off her master hale,  
But left behind her ain gray tail :  
The carlin clauthed her by the rump,  
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,  
Ilk man and mother's son, take heed :  
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,  
Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,  
Think ! ye may buy the joys o'er dear—  
Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

But the *variety* of Burns' powers is so strongly

characteristic, that it would not be right to present only this animated narrative as illustrative of his style. Having succeeded in escaping the contempt and ridicule of Mr. Plush while we dipped into these very unaristocratic descriptions, we will venture on one of his poems of humour. When lovers quarrel, the offended party generally falls into the heroics. There are many allusions to tears, and darts run in a very murderous manner through aching and disconsolate hearts. Now, there seems to have been a tiff of some sort between a young lassie and her wooer, which resulted in a temporary estrangement, and Burns, acting as the poetic chronicler of this event, ought to have treated us to sighs and sobs, with a description of blighted hopes, and care rhyming to despair. This, however, is the way he tells the story, and perhaps it is better than a more melancholy method would have been :—

Last May a braw wooer cam down the lang glen,  
And sair wi' his love he did deave me ;  
**I** said there was naething I hated like men,  
The deuce gae wi'm, to believe, believe me,  
The deuce gae wi'm, to believe me !

He spak o' the darts in my bonnie black een,  
And vow'd for my love he was dying ;  
**I** said he might die when he liked for Jean,  
The Lord forgie me for lying, for lying,  
The Lord forgie me for lying !

A weel-stocked mailen—himsel' for the laird—  
 And marriage aff-hand, were his proffers ;  
 I never loot on that I kenn'd it, or car'd,  
 But thought I may hae waur offers, waur offers,  
 But thought I might hae waur offers.

But what wad ye think ? In a fortnight or less—  
 The deil tak his taste to gae near her !  
 He up the Gateslack to my black cousin Bess,  
 Guess ye how, the jad ! I could bear her, could bear her,  
 Guess ye how, the jad ! I could bear her.

But a' the niest week as I fretted wi' care,  
 I gaed to the tryste o' Dalgarnock,  
 And wha but my fine fickle lover was there !  
 I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock, a warlock,  
 I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock.

But owre my left shouther I gae him a blink,  
 Lest neebors might say I was saucy ;  
 My wooer he caper'd as he'd been in drink,  
 And vow'd I was his dear lassie, dear lassie,  
 And vow'd I was his dear lassie.

I spier'd for my cousin fu' couthy and sweet,  
 Gin she had recovered her hearin',  
 And how my auld shoon suited her shauchled feet,  
 But, heavens ! how he fell a swearin', a swearin',  
 But, heavens ! how he fell a swearin' !

He begged, for Gudesake, I wad be his wife,  
 Or else I would kill him wi' sorrow ;  
 So, e'en to preserve the poor body in life,  
 I think I maun wed him to-morrow, to-morrow,  
 I think I maun wed him to-morrow.

This little song would have furnished material enough for a fashionable novel in three volumes. In fact, this *is* the story with which most fashionable novels are concerned, only the fickle lover is the young and fascinating Lord Ponjovy, of the noble house of Fitzaddletop,—and the captivating heroine who wins him back is the high-born Lady Cecilia Macreginald, who is married at the end of the story by two archdeacons, assisted by a bishop. So difficult it seems now-a-days to marry an earl's daughter, that it generally takes two or three clergymen to perform the job. What can be better, in the same way, more graphic and life-like, than the wooing, rejection, and final triumph of Duncan Gray? Burns had probably never read the play of the Spanish author, which is called “*Disdain cured by Disdain*,” and shows how the only way to overcome a fine lady's airs of superiority and coldness is to treat them with contempt; but the spirit of the play and the poem is the same.

Duncan Gray cam here to woo,  
    Ha, ha, the wooing o't,  
On blythe yule night when we were fou,  
    Ha, ha, the wooing o't.  
Maggie coost her head fu' high,  
Look'd asklent and unco skeigh,  
Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh;  
    Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Duncan fleech'd, and Duncan pray'd,

    Ha, ha, the wooing o't;

Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig,

    Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Duncan sigh'd baith out and in,

Grat his een baith bleer't and blin',

Spak o' lowpin o'er a linn ;

    Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Time and chance are but a tide,

    Ha, ha, the wooing o't;

Slighted love is sair to bide,

    Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Shall I, like a fool, quoth he,

For a naughty hizzie die ?

She may gae to—France for me !

    Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

How it comes let doctors tell,

    Ha, ha, the wooing o't;

Meg grew sick—as he grew heal,

    Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Something in her bosom wrings,

For relief a sigh she brings ;

And O, her een, they spak sic things !

    Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Duncan was a lad o' grace,

    Ha, ha, the wooing o't;

Maggie's was a piteous case,

    Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Duncan could na be her death,

Swelling pity smoor'd his wrath ;

Now they're crouse and canty baith,

    Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

But, charming as these poems are for their mirth

and humour, they are but feeble specimens of the real powers of the Ayrshire ploughman. It has already been said that variety was what he excelled in ; but if we were called upon to decide on his greatest merit, it would at once be conceded that as a song writer he had no equal. Now a song, to judge from the number of them we meet with, does not seem a very difficult style of composition ; but neither is it difficult to write an epic, or an ode, or a tragedy—as some people have written them. It is remarkably easy to do anything ill. But to excel in song-writing is given to the chosen few. There are more fine plays and admirable poems than really excellent songs written between Shakspeare and Burns. One reason is, that music is such a powerful auxiliary, that it very often destroys the ally it was called in to aid. When the ear is pleased, and the words supply some association on which the mind can pleasantly dwell in connexion with the melody, the hearer is satisfied, although the language is unartistic or weak. Nay, when the impression is once made, no amount of improvement on the original words will banish them from the popular heart. The burden of the song has fixed itself on the memory from childhood, and the music, though entering into a far higher and loftier marriage (even with immortal verse), never ceases to recall the charm it exercised in its early prime ; and people go on

singing the rough old words, unmeaning though they be, in preference to the infinitely superior language to which the music would have been more appropriate. Conscious of this, it was one of the necessities of Burns's position to retain the old chorus—the old story where it was possible—but so to invest them with new sentiment, so to raise them in poetic rank, that the singers were beguiled into the improvement, and the listeners were elevated, or touched, or soothed by apparently the same strains which hitherto had relied for their influence only on their old associations. Thus we find the beautiful ballad of “My ain kind Deary, O,” rise like a gold-winged butterfly out of the dull chrysalis of the “Lea Rig;” and from the prosaic commencement of an old rhyme, “This is no my ain house,” comes one of the best and sweetest of modern love songs, “This is no my ain lassie.”

A song is a short poem, devoting itself to the evolution of one sentiment, and not wandering off into a variety of ingenious fancies. This constitutes the difficulty of the composition; for, in order to be successful, it must depend on the one undivided feeling with which it starts—with no extraneous ornament—perfectly simple in language—perfectly natural in thought; for a song ought, of all things, to have the appearance of extemporaneous freshness—the bursting

forth of an unrestrainable emotion, proceeding entirely from the heart, and not borrowing foreign graces from the learning or imagination of the singer. How beautiful, how simple, the invitation in the first of songs!—

Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo! the winter is past, the rain is over, and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away!

A song, moreover, ought to be peculiarly a dramatic composition, conveying the sentiments supposed to fill the singer's mind in language adapted to his situation; the words of a great chieftain encouraging his men to battle, as in Bruce's address at Bannockburn, being different in form and quality from the soft strains of a rural lover impatient for the appearance of his mistress—

When owsen from the furrow'd field  
Return so dowf and weary O.

There are men in Denmark who would have made no distinction in simplicity of language and vigour of idea between the heroic king and the enamoured ploughboy. When a minstrel of the ordinary sort composes a song, we think we perceive a gentleman seated at his desk, mending

his pen, writing his lines ; treating the poor little idea he has chosen for his lay as milliners treat their model, loading it with fantastic drapery, sometimes dressing it as a duchess, sometimes as a shepherdess; but we are well aware, all the time, that it consists of nothing but a leathern shape stuffed with sawdust, and features which imitate humanity in rouged and whitened wax. But in the true bard we feel as if the words rushed forth without premeditation—as if the thoughts rose gradually, warming, brightening, strengthening to the close ; and that if ornaments come, if similes are used, they are but the accessories of the sentiment, and rise as naturally as daisies in grass. But there is no searching after comparisons, no travelling to the ends of the earth for resemblances. This is wit, not passion. And the true poet is so assured in his vocation that he treats the same subject differently, according as it takes the form of common verse or of song. In the one the individual does not come so prominently forward, for it contains only a *description* of his feelings ; in the other, it is the outgush of his feelings themselves, and bears the same relation to the longer poem which the account of an adventure bears to being present at it—the report in the newspaper to the hearing of the speech. Let us take an example of this distinction, in a poem and a song

of Burns, both referring to the same object. In his "Epistle to Davie, a brother poet," he thus expresses his affection for his wedded Jean :—

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts !  
 (To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,  
     And flatt'ry I detest,)  
 This life has joys for you and I ;  
 And joys that riches ne'er could buy,  
     And joys the very best.  
 There's a' the pleasures o' the heart,  
     The lover an' the frien' ;  
 Ye hae your Meg, your dearest part,  
     And I, my darling Jean !  
     It warms me, it charms me,  
     To mention but her name ;  
     It heats me, it beets me,  
     And sets me a' on flame.

Oh, all ye pow'rs who rule above !  
 Oh Thou, whose very self art love !  
     Thou know'st my words sincere !  
 The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,  
 Or my more dear immortal part,  
     Is not more fondly dear !  
 When heart-corroding care and grief  
     Deprive my soul of rest,  
 Her dear idea brings relief  
     And solace to my breast !

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Oh, how that name inspires my style !  
 The words come skelpin, rank and file  
     Amaist afore I ken !  
 The ready measure rins as fine  
 As Phoebus and the famous Nine  
     Were glowrin owre my pen !

A beautiful tribute this to the potency of Jean's influence both on heart and brain. But turn we now to a SONG addressed to the same enchantress; see how the thoughts condense themselves to the one great purpose of pouring forth his affection, and how the words glow, as if on fire :—

O, were I on Parnassus' hill!  
Or had of Helicon my fill;  
That I might catch poetic skill,  
    To sing how dear I love thee.  
But Nith maun be my Muse's well:  
My Muse maun be thy bonnie sel';  
On Corsincon I'll glow'r and spell,  
    And write how dear I love thee.

Then come, sweet Muse, inspire my lay!  
For a' the lee-lang simmer's day  
I coudna sing, I coudna say,  
    How much, how dear, I love thee.  
I see thee dancing o'er the green,  
Thy waist sae jimp, thy limbs sae clean,  
Thy tempting lips, thy roguish een—  
    By heaven and earth I love thee!

By night, by day, a-field, at hame,  
The thoughts o' thee my breast inflame;  
And aye I muse and sing thy name—  
    I only live to love thee.  
Tho' I were doom'd to wander on  
Beyond the sea, beyond the sun,  
Till my last weary sand was run;  
    Till then—and then I love thee.

This and many other impassioned songs were addressed to Mrs. Burns ; “ O’ a’ the airts,” we have seen, on her being forced away from him ; the last-quoted on her happy return. But people are always apt to believe that a song breathing such apparently personal feelings, enriched with local colouring, and even containing a Christian or surname by which to identify the heroine, is addressed to some particular person, and alludes to some particular incident. But this, with so truly imaginative a writer as Burns, was not the case ; and a great portion of the bad fame under which he labours is no doubt attributable to the common mistake on this subject. He himself, with a wayward pride in his evil reputation, rather encouraged this delusion by insinuating that many of his warmest effusions were the transcript of actual feelings and events. But a cautious criticism makes us doubt whether his Montgomery’s Peggies, Clarindas, Bonnie Bells, and his list as long as Don Juan’s, had a real existence at all, or furnished any sufficient ground for the excessive tenderness of the sentiments expressed. Damsels of high degree and country lasses have been pointed out by different editors as the great originals immortalized in those performances ; but it will be safer to consider them at most as the starting points of his muse, and that the slightest possible amount of acquaint-

ance in fact, took form and substance as happy, hopeful, or despairing love, as suited the exigencies of the verse. Burns saw that a song to be worth anything at all, must be tender beyond the bounds of ordinary friendship. He, therefore, in the case of those carefully described and minutely identified ladies, uses many phrases expressive of the deepest affection and closest intimacy, when in reality nothing of the kind existed. It was the poet using his marvellous gift of transmuting everything he touched into something richer and more valuable than before. Let us inquire into his relations with Clarinda. A very slight acquaintance with this person, and a correspondence carried on with unusual stiffness and formality, are all that can be proved with regard to the terms they were on. But leaving the field of letters, and coming into the more congenial territory of song, what do we find? We find the most tender and touching lament that ever was composed.

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever ;  
Ae fareweel, and then for ever !  
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,  
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.  
Who shall say that fortune grieves him  
While the star of hope she leaves him ?  
Me, nae cheerfu' twinkle lights me ;  
Dark despair around benights me.

I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,  
Naething could resist my Nancy;  
But to see her, was to love her;  
Love but her, and love for ever.—  
Had we never lov'd sae kindly,  
Had we never lov'd sae blindly,  
Never met—or never parted,  
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Fare thee weel, thou first and fairest!  
Fare thee weel, thou best and dearest!  
Thine be ilka joy and treasure,  
Peace, enjoyment, love, and pleasure!  
Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;  
Ae farewell, alas! for ever!  
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,  
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee!

These sentiments, exquisitely true in themselves, and all these agonies of regret and pangs of recollection, were addressed to a young lady, who, as if to prove the fantastic nature of the connexion, bore a fictitious name, and was about as real an object of adoration to the bard as Dulcinea del Toboso was to Don Quixote. We may safely conclude that she was a quiet, well-behaved, respectable young woman, when answering to her own baptismal appellation and performing the duties of her station, and who would have been immensely scandalized if the words of these admirable stanzas had been addressed to her in her true character. Whatever

amount of tears and sighs, therefore, the poet may have lavished on the ethereal Clarinda, we may be pretty sure he never passed the bounds of the strictest decorum in his intercourse with the substantial Mrs. Meiklehose ; for this is the dreadful prose into which matrimony translated the heroine of so much poetry. The license taken by the muse seems to have been perfectly understood at the time. Song had, in fact, a language of its own, and scarcely required to be reduced into ordinary speech before its actual meaning was found out. Allowance was made for its exaggerations, as men travelling in the East have to make deductions from the grandeur of Oriental metaphor, where a wish that you may live a thousand years merely means, “ I hope you’re pretty well,” and “ May the prophet stretch his shield upon your journey !” is equivalent to “ Good-bye, Brown.”

Here is another proof of the amplifying effects of the poetic tongue :—Mrs. Riddel, of Glen Riddel, his friend and patroness, rich in “ world’s gear,” but richer still in the universal respect with which she was surrounded, had appeared more formal than usual in her reply to a letter of the poet. Does he write a note of inquiry as to the cause of her coldness ? Does he tell her how such a change from her uniform kindness distresses him ? Of course he does ;

for her correspondence was one of the chief charms of his life, and he was grateful for the sympathy and condescension of so distinguished a friend. And what is the form it takes? This is his letter of expostulation :—

Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy ?  
Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy ?  
Well thou know'st my aching heart—  
And canst thou leave me thus for pity ?  
Is this thy plighted, fond regard,  
Thus cruelly to part, my Katy ?  
Is this thy faithful swain's reward—  
An aching, broken heart, my Katy !

Farewell ! and ne'er such sorrows tear  
That fickle heart of thine, my Katy !  
Thou mayst find those will love thee dear—  
But not a love like mine, my Katy !

Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy ?  
Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy ?  
Well thou know'st my aching heart—  
And canst thou leave me thus for pity ?

Would not any one believe that this was the outpouring of a lover's despair at losing his sweetheart, and not merely a lamentation over the indifference he thought he had perceived in a lady's correspondence? To him, to Mrs. Riddel, and to all who were in the secret of the true meaning of poetic language, the sense was plain enough. It is a simple question, to which he requested an answer, and meant, in

ordinary phraseology, that he begged she would resume her accustomed tone of familiarity and friendship. This is a very strong argument in favour of the merely imaginary nature of so many passionate descriptions of beauty and allusions to rapturous meetings and melancholy separations. How else are we to account for his verses in honour of “Jessie Lewars,” the last and most beautiful of his songs? Just look at the circumstances of that composition. Jessie Lewars was the kindest nurse, the most devoted attendant on his sick bed—very young, very innocent, and the daughter of one of his favourite companions in the Excise. He was grateful to her for her kindness to his wife and children, and, in one of the intervals of ease, called for pen and ink, and wrote a song in her honour. What do we see in this song? The grief of a hopeless lover—the impassioned admiration, the warm address, which that description of poem requires, but having no reference to the state of his own feelings towards Jessie Lewars. His attachment to her was that of an affectionate and grateful friend—he looked on her almost as a daughter; but once put the pen into his hand, once let him think of her as the heroine of a song, away go such sober sentiments; they become elevated into a far warmer

sphere—kindliness becomes love, and gratitude passion :—

Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear ;  
Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear ;  
Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,  
And soft as their parting tear—Jessy !

Altho' thou maun never be mine,  
Altho' even hope is denied ;  
'Tis sweeter for thee despairing,  
Than aught in the world beside—Jessy !

I mourn through the gay, gaudy day,  
As, hopeless, I muse on thy charms :  
But welcome the dream o' sweet slumber,  
For then I am lockt in thy arms—Jessy !

I guess by the dear angel smile,  
I guess by the love-rolling e'e ;  
But why urge the tender confession  
'Gainst fortune's fell cruel decree ?—Jessy !  
Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear ;  
Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear ;  
Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,  
And soft as their parting tear—Jessy !

As another instance of the metamorphosis which all his feelings underwent the moment he threw them into the form of song, let us see what he makes of the admiration excited in him by ladies of a rank so far above his own that no thought of winning their affection could

enter his mind. Song was, in fact, to him merely the language of love; and whatever he put into his magic cauldron, whether esteem, or respect, or reverence, the result was always the same. Pour what you chose into the conjuror's bottle, nothing came out but love.

The beautiful Lucy Johnstone, says Allan Cunningham, married to Oswald, of Auchencruive, was the heroine of "Wat ye wha's in yon town," a lady of lofty station, an heiress, and a toast—and thus she is sung by the married gauger:—

O, wat ye wha's in yon town,  
Ye see the e'enin sun upon?  
The fairest dame's in yon town,  
That e'enin sun is shining on.

Now haply down yon gay green shaw,  
She wanders by yon spreading tree;  
How blest ye flow'rs that round her blaw,  
Ye catch the glances o' her e'e!

How blest ye birds that round her sing,  
And welcome in the blooming year!  
And doubly welcome be the spring,  
The season to my Lucy dear.

The sun blinks blithe on yon town,  
And on yon bonnie braes of Ayr;  
But my delight in yon town,  
And dearest bliss, is Lucy fair.

Without my love, not a' the charms  
 O' Paradise could yield me joy ;  
 But gie me Lucy in my arms,  
 And welcome Lapland's dreary sky !

My cave wad be a lover's bower,  
 Tho' raging winter rent the air ;  
 And she a lovely little flower,  
 That I wad tent and shelter there.

O sweet is she in yon town,  
 Yon sinkin sun's gane down upon ;  
 A fairer than's in yon town  
 His setting beam ne'er shone upon.

If angry fate is sworn my foe,  
 And suffering I am doom'd to bear ;  
 I careless quit aught else below,  
 But spare me—spare me, Lucy dear !

For while life's dearest blood is warm,  
 Ae thought frae her shall ne'er depart,  
 And she—as fairest is her form !  
 She has the truest, kindest heart !  
 O, wat ye wha's in yon town,  
 Ye see the e'enin sun upon ?  
 The fairest dame's in yon town  
 That e'enin sun is shining on.

On a visit for a single day to the minister of Lochmaben, Dumfriesshire, he is very much pleased with the beauty and manners of his host's young daughter, the blue-eyed Jean Jeffrey. What was the form this feeling took

in song? He threatens, if she refuses his love,  
to die for her sake!—

I gaed a waefu' gate yestreen,  
A gate, I fear I'll dearly rue ;  
I gat my death frae twa sweet een,  
Twa lovely een o' bonnie blue,  
'Twas not her golden ringlets bright ;  
Her lips, like roses, wat wi' dew,  
Her heaving bosom, lily-white—  
It was her een sae bonnie blue.

She talk'd, she smil'd, my heart she wyl'd ;  
She charm'd my soul—I wist na how ;  
And ay the stound, the deadly wound,  
Cam frae her een sae bonnie blue.  
But spare to speak, and spare to speed ;  
She'll aiblins listen to my vow :  
Should she refuse, I'll lay my dead  
To her twa een sae bonnie blue.

Many other instances might be given, but these will suffice to relieve the memory of the poet from the imputation of being a professed Lothario. Burns, in fact, seems to have been a hypocrite the wrong way, and to have affected more vices than he possessed. It is not indeed surprising that the number of those amorous effusions should have given rise to the reports of his dissolute life. He wrote so constantly in the character of a passionate admirer of the fair sex, that at last people thought “ himself must be the hero of his story.” You may have heard

of an actor, who was placed so constantly before the audience in the character of a swindler, and sometimes even as first or second murderer in a melodrama, that he applied to the manager for a change of parts; for the baker had begun to refuse him credit, and his landlady expected to be strangled in her sleep. Burns's reputation suffers from the same cause. If he had written worse amatory poems, he would have been thought a better man. With this explanation we can look on his most rapturous effusions as exercises of his genius, and not manifestations of his inconstancy. "Wilt thou be my Dearie?" seems rather a free-and-easy question if addressed to any mortal mixture of earth's mould, but soars away into the region where passion loses all its grossness when directed to an abstraction, or even, as the biographers maintain, to the mother of a belted earl:—

Wilt thou be my dearie?  
When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,  
Wilt thou let me cheer thee?  
By the treasure of my soul,  
That's the love I bear thee!  
I swear and vow that only thou  
Shall ever be my dearie.  
Only thou, I swear and vow,  
Shall ever be my dearie.

Lassie, say thou lo'es me;  
Or if thou wilt no be my ain,

Say na thou'l<sup>t</sup> refuse me :  
 If it winna, canna be,  
 Thou, for thine may choose me,  
 Let me, lassie, quickly die,  
 Trusting that thou lo'es me.  
 Lassie, let me quickly die,  
 Trusting that thou lo'es me.

It requires also some acquaintance with the actual meaning of Burns' words to enter fully into the sense of his song to Chloris.

Sae flaxen were her ringlets,  
 Her eyebrows of a darker hue,  
 Bewitchingly o'er-arching  
 Twa laughin' een o' bonnie blue.  
 Her smiling sae wylng,  
 Wad make a wretch forget his woe ;  
 What pleasure, what treasure,  
 Unto these rosy lips to grow :  
 Such was my Chloris' bonnie face,  
 When first her bonnie face I saw ;  
 And aye my Chloris' dearest charm,  
 She says she lo'es me best of a'.

Like harmony her motion ;  
 Her pretty ankle is a spy  
 Betraying fair proportion,  
 Wad mak a saint forget the sky.  
 Sae warming, sae charming,  
 Her faultless form and gracefu' air ;  
 Ilk feature—auld Nature  
 Declar'd that she could do nae mair :  
 Hers are the willing chains o' love,  
 By conquering beauty's sovereign law ;  
 And aye my Chloris' dearest charm,  
 She says she lo'es me best of a'.

Let others love the city,  
And gaudy show at sunny noon ;  
Gie me the lonely valley,  
The dewy eve, and rising moon  
Fair beaming, and streaming,  
Her silver light the boughs amang ;  
While falling, recalling,  
The amorous thrush concludes his sang :  
There, dearest Chloris, wilt thou rove  
By wimpling burn and leafy shaw,  
And hear my vows o' truth and love,  
And say thou lo'es me best of a'.

But however groundless the origin of these effusions may be, such a repertory of truly expressive and passionate love-songs does not exist in any language. The soft, the tender, the happy, the mournful, the hopeful, and the despairing, all find their perfect representation ; and—as in all poems of surpassing value—they contain riches undreamt of even by their author. Each reader finds the feeling or sentiment which possesses him brought clearly out in language which he could not have used, but which, being written down, seems exactly suited to his position. As the speeches in Shakspeare not merely carry on the play and represent the feelings of the personages of the story, but by some marvellous process adapt themselves to the sentiments of thousands of people who were never in the situation contemplated by the poet, so in

the songs of Burns there is an inexhaustible treasury of exactly fitting expressions for every variety of thought and condition. In this respect how different from the songs of other men! The quaintnesses of the song writers of Charles's time, and the unmistakeable marks they carry of their date and origin, make them unfit vehicles for the conveyance of any sentiments but those of that particular period and state of manners. Later attempts have the same fault; but in Burns alone, and in Shakspeare, do we find the individual lost in the species; for those great authors give us an insight more into the great passions of humanity than into the peculiarities of particular men. Othello is the passion of jealousy; Macbeth of guilty ambition; and Burns' songs are simply the passion of love.

But there is a difference between a song, in the strict definition to which it is here confined, and a ballad; though both equally are sung. A ballad is a narrative in verse, set to music, and contains avowedly the sentiments of the personages introduced, and not the singer's own. And how beautiful his ballads are! In them the warmth of his expressions gives only a rich colouring to the feeling, and does not break forth into a raging fire, impossible to be restrained. He does not dramatise the situation,

constituting himself the lover, but draws his charm rather from description than from his own sensations. In this he resembles the great poet of the present time, to whom at first view you would think he had less affinity than to any other. For Tennyson is the most correct, the most richly-toned, and the most majestic of poets, with more decoration of language expended on his verses than has ever before been lavished on such massiveness of thought. It is the profuse ornamentation of Benvenuto on cups of solid gold. See how he describes a landscape; not by compiling a catalogue of its component parts—so many oaks, so many roses, such an extent of water, and such an amount of light and shade, but always in subordination to the human interest, always the framework and setting, but never the main object of his picture. Then mark the minuteness of his observation, and the accuracy of his knowledge of fruit and plant and flower; and how perfectly the scene is always in keeping with the sentiment. It is this that brings landscape into the Poet's domain. He ennobles it into something higher than mere landscape, not by altering its features, or enriching it with exotic trees, or birds of supernatural plumage, but by attaching a feeling to every portion of the description. For instance:—a youth is going to pay his first visit

to a girl, whom he has so often heard described as good and beautiful, that he knows beforehand he is certain to fall in love with her. What is the landscape he travels through as he walks with his friend towards her home?

— All the land in flowery squares  
Beneath a broad and equal blowing wind,  
Smelt of the coming summer, as one large cloud  
Drew downward ; but all else of Heaven was pure  
Up to the Sun, and May from verge to verge,  
And May with me from head to heel. And now  
As though 'twere yesterday : as though it were  
The hour just flown, that morn with all its sound  
(For those old Mays had thrice the life of these)  
Rings in mine ears. The steer forgot to graze,  
And where the hedge-row cuts the pathway, stood  
Leaning his horns into the neighbour's field,  
And lowing to his fellows. From the woods  
Came voices of the well-contented doves.  
The lark could scarce get out his notes for joy,  
But shook his song together as he neared  
His happy home, the ground. To left and right  
The cuckoo told his name to all the hills ;  
The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm ;  
The red-cap whistled ; and the nightingale  
Sang loud, as though he were the bird of day.

This is a beautiful preparation for the most charming of Tennyson's shorter poems—"The Gardener's Daughter." So the key-note to many of Burns' ballads is struck at once by a vivid portraiture of the scenery where his cha-

racters are placed. In one of the finest of them—destroyed, however, as has been already mentioned, by his anxiety to retain the foolish old burden of a well-known air—he does little more than describe the external objects by which he is surrounded, but extracts from each of them a sentiment in accordance with the state of his feelings. Omit the chorus, and the remainder rises into the dignity of a serious poem.

Again rejoicing nature sees  
 Her robe assume its vernal hues,  
 Her leafy locks wave in the breeze,  
 All freshly steep'd in morning dews.  
 And maun I still on Menie doat,  
 And bear the scorn that's in her e'e?  
 For it's jet, jet black, an' it's like a hawk,  
 An' it winna let a body be.

In vain to me the cowslips blaw,  
 In vain to me the vi'lets spring;  
 In vain to me, in glen or shaw,  
 The mavis and the lintwhite sing.

The merry ploughboy cheers his team,  
 Wi' joy the tentie seedsman stalks;  
 But life to me's a weary dream,  
 A dream of ane that never wauks.

The wanton coot the water skims,  
 Amang the reeds the ducklings cry,  
 The stately swan majestic swims,  
 And every thing is blest but I.

The sheep-herd steeks his faulding slap,  
And owre the moorland whistles shrill;  
Wi' wild, unequal, wand'ring step,  
I meet him on the dewy hill.

And when the lark, 'tween light and dark,  
Blythe waukens by the daisy's side,  
And mounts and sings on flittering wings,  
A woe-worn ghaist I hameward glide.

Come, Winter, with thine angry howl,  
And raging bend the naked tree:  
Thy gloom will soothe my cheerless soul,  
When nature all is sad like me!  
And maun I still on Menie doat,  
And bear the scorn that's in her e'e?  
For it's jet, jet black, an' it's like a hawk,  
An' it winna let a body be.

In the same way, what a landscape of wintry desolation is presented to us in the opening stanzas of "My Nannie, O!" But in this instance, the spirit in which it is viewed impresses it with a character of content and happiness very different from the melancholy of the last picture, which consisted only of the happy aspects of nature—the blackbird's song and the bloom of the cowslip. In both the beauty of the picture consists in contrast. To the farm-labourer the setting of the wintry sun, however dreary the darkness it produces, is the signal not only of release from toil, but of the begin-

ning of his journey over heath and hill to visit his sweetheart.

There were certain nights on which, with the consent of the elders, the young people of the neighbourhood, even though previously unknown to each other, were allowed to meet. In the pastoral districts of Clydesdale and Nithsdale that custom continues still. Perhaps it arises in those thinly-peopled regions from the absence of any town or village where acquaintance could naturally be formed. There are lonely farm-houses, many miles away from the nearest habitation, with the cart-roads impassable in the bad weather, and the daily labour at other seasons requiring the undivided attention of all the household. In situations such as these the young lad or lass would grow up in a state of savage isolation, unless it were for the custom now alluded to, by which an adventurous swain might traverse the mountain, and by tapping on the window procure an interview with any curious maiden who might be inclined to respond to the summons. She would put on her snood, and go out into the night to see who the visitor was. He would probably begin, after the manner of young Norval, by telling her his name, and where he fed his flock. If the impression was mutually agreeable, the visit would be repeated, till in the course of time he would be invited in,

and introduced to the family circle. By this simple and well-understood arrangement, the solitude of the shieling among the hills, or farmhouse in the valley, was compensated for. There was no master of the ceremonies, to be sure, to make the formal introduction; the tap on the window-pane supplied the place of that very polite official, and an acquaintance sprang up between the boy and girl, not the less pleasant perhaps, that it was entirely of their own making. The hero of the little ballad now to be quoted seems to have got over the first difficulty. His Nannie has given him several meetings, and at the trysted hour expects the well-known signal. No wonder he is in a rapture of delight at the last blink of the expiring sun. The twelve or fourteen miles of rugged way will soon be got over, and he will forget the storm and journey at the first “whisper in the porch.”

Behind yon hills where Lugar flows,  
'Mang moors an' mosses many, O,  
The wintry sun the day has clos'd,  
And I'll awa to Nannie, O.

The westlin wind blaws loud an' shill;  
The night's baith mirk and rainy, O;  
But I'll get my plaid, an' out I'll steal,  
An' owre the hills to Nannie, O.

My Nannie's charming, sweet, an' young ;  
 Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O :  
 May ill befa' the flattering tongue  
 That wad beguile my Nannie, O.

Her face is fair, her heart is true,  
 As spotless as she's bonnie, O :  
 The op'ning gowan, wat wi' dew,  
 Nae purer is than Nannie, O.

A country lad is my degree,  
 An' few there be that ken me, O ;  
 But what care I how few they be ?  
 I'm welcome aye to Nannie, O.

My riches a's my penny-fee,  
 An' I maun guide it cannie, O ;  
 But warl's gear ne'er troubles me,  
 My thoughts are a' my Nannie, O.

Our auld guidman delights to view  
 His sheep an' kye thrive bonnie, O ;  
 But I'm as blythe that hauds his pleugh,  
 An' has nae care but Nannie, O.

Come weel, come woe, I care na by,  
 I'll tak what Heav'n will sen' me, O :  
 Nae ither care in life have I,  
 But live, an' love my Nannie, O.

But sometimes the meeting was more restrained, and consisted only of a conversation, like that between Romeo and Juliet, from the elevation of a balcony. Whether the Capulets and Montagues winked at this arrangement, or

whether it occurred without their knowledge, the effect was the same. An acquaintance was commenced, which in due time ended in matrimony ; and if unfortunately broken off by the fickleness of the lady, it furnished, at least, excellent ground for the lover's lamentation. One of Burns' earliest songs was addressed to a maid who seems to have promised an interview at the window ; and we are to gather from the tenderness and pathos of the words, that she sometimes did not keep true to her engagement.

O Mary, at thy window be,  
 It is the wish'd, the trysted hour !  
 Those smiles and glances let me see  
 That make the miser's treasure poor :  
 How blithely wad I bide the stoure,  
 A weary slave frae sun to sun ;  
 Could I the rich reward secure,  
 The lovely Mary Morison.

Yestreen, when to the trembling string  
 The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha',  
 To thee my fancy took its wing,  
 I sat, but neither heard or saw :  
 Tho' this was fair, and that was braw,  
 And yon the toast of a' the town,  
 I sigh'd, and said amang them a',  
 " Ye are na Mary Morison."

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,  
 Wha for thy sake wad gladly die ?  
 Or canst thou break that heart of his,  
 Whase only faut is loving thee ?

If love for love thou wilt na gie,  
At least be pity to me shown ;  
A thought ungentle canna be  
The thought o' Mary Morison.

There are many other ballads, both grave and gay, which it would be a pleasure to quote, and many also of his longer and more ambitious efforts, which have taken their place in our language as poems properly so called. The best known of these is the "Cotter's Saturday Night." With the exception of very few stanzas, and an occasional expression, this poem is in English. It has therefore stood the test of comparison with the works of acknowledged English poets, and has not suffered side by side with either Crabbe or Wordsworth.

"The short and simple annals of the poor" were never so tenderly delivered ; and if in such escapades as "Holy Willie's Prayer," and the "Kirk in Danger," Burns had lashed the vices of hypocrisy and pretension, far deeper was his feeling—as shown in this patriarchal picture—of the beauty of true religion and sincere domestic piety. It ought to be accepted as an apology and atonement for the over-vehemence of his attacks on the false and cruel. And it was so accepted in many a pious household in his native land. Many a strict disciplinarian is softened as he thinks of this poem ; and when the wilder

portion of the poet's works is mentioned, says—  
 “Ah! but he could na have been altogether bad ;  
 he must have had fine feelings in him, and a  
 reverent regard for goodness, the man that wrote  
 the ‘Cotter’s Saturday Night.’”

He must have had more. He must have had a Wilkie-like power of producing a family scene, and endowing it with life and sentiment. It is a group forming a delightful companion to the fireside picture by Goldsmith of the Vicar of Wakefield.

My lov’d, my honour’d, much respected friend !  
 No mercenary bard his homage pays ;  
 With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end :  
 My dearest meed, a friend’s esteem and praise :  
 To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,  
 The lowly train in life’s sequester’d scene ;  
 The native feelings strong, the guileless ways ;  
 What Aikin in a cottage would have been ;  
 — Ah ! tho’ his worth unknown, far happier there, I ween !

November chill blaws loud wi’ angry sugh ;  
 The short’ning winter-day is near a close ;  
 The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh :  
 The black’ning trains o’ crows to their repose :  
 The toil-worn Cotter frae his labour goes,  
 This night his weekly moil is at an end,  
 Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,  
 Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,  
 And weary, o’er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,  
 Beneath the shelter of an aged tree ;

Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin, stacher thro'  
 To meet their Dad, wi' flichterin noise an' glee.  
 His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnily,  
 His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie Wifie's smile,  
 The lisping infant prattling on his knee,  
 Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile,  
 An' makes him quite forget his labour and his toil.

Belyve, the elder bairns cam drapping in,  
 At service out, amang the farmers roun':  
 Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin  
 A cannie errand to a neebor town:  
 Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,  
 In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,  
 Comes hame, perhaps to shew a braw new gown,  
 Or deposite her sair-won penny-fee,  
 To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

With joy unfeign'd, brothers and sisters meet,  
 An' each for other's welfare kindly spiers:  
 The social hours, swift-wing'd unnotic'd fleet;  
 Each tells the unco's that he sees or hears;  
 The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;  
 Anticipation forward points the view.  
 The mother, wi' her needle an' her sheers,  
 Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new;—  
 The Father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

Their master's an' their mistress's command,  
 The younkers a' are warned to obey;  
 And mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,  
 An' ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play:  
 And O! be sure to fear the Lord alway!  
 And mind your duty, duly, morn and night!  
 Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,  
 Implore His counsel and assisting might:  
 They never sought in vain, that sought the Lord aright!"

But, hark ! a rap comes gently to the door ;  
 Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,  
 Tells how a neebor lad cam o'er the moor,  
 To do some errands, and convoy her hame.  
 The wily Mother sees the conscious flame  
 Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek,  
 With heart-struck anxious care, inquires his name,  
 While Jenny haflins is afraid to speak ;  
 Weel pleas'd the Mother hears, it's nae wild, worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben ;  
 A strappan youth ; he takts the Mother's eye ;  
 Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en ;  
 The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.  
 The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,  
 But blate, an laithfu', scarce can weel behave ;  
 The Mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy  
 What makes the youth sae bashfu' and sae grave ;  
 Weel pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like the lave.

O happy love ! where love like this is found !  
 O heart-felt raptures !—bliss beyond compare !  
 I've paced much this weary, mortal round,  
 And sage experience bids me this declare—  
 { “ If heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,  
   One cordial in this melancholy vale,  
   'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair  
     In other's arms, breathe out the tender tale,  
 Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale.” }

{ Is there, in human form, that bears a heart—  
   A wretch ! a villain ! lost to love and truth !  
   That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,  
     Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth ? }

Curse on his perjur'd arts ! dissembling smooth !  
 Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exil'd ?  
 Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,  
 Points to the parents fondling o'er their child ?  
 Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild ?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,  
 The halesome parritch, chief of Scotia's food :  
 The soupe their only hawkie does afford,  
 That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood :  
 The dame brings forth in complimentary mood,  
 To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck fell,  
 An' aft he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid ;  
 The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,  
 How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,  
 They, round the ingle, form a circle wide ;  
 The Sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,  
 The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride ;  
 His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,  
 His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare ;  
 Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,  
 He wales a portion with judicious care ;  
 And "Let us worship God !" he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise ;  
 They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim :  
 Perhaps Dundee's wild-warbling measures rise,  
 Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy of the name ;  
 Or noble Elgin beets the heaven-ward flame,  
 The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays :  
 Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame ;  
 The tickl'd ear no heart-felt raptures raise ;  
 Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like Father reads the sacred page,  
 How Abram was the friend of GOD on high ;  
 Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage  
 With Amalek's ungracious progeny ;  
 Or how the royal bard did groaning lie  
 Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire ;  
 Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry ;  
 Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire ;  
 Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,  
 How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed ;  
 How HE, who bore in Heaven the second name,  
 Had not on earth whereon to lay His head,  
 How His first followers and servants sped,  
 The precepts sage they wrote to many a land :  
 How he, who lone in Patmos banished,  
 Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand ;  
 And heard great Bab'l'on's doom pronounc'd by Heaven's  
 command.

Then kneeling down, to HEAVEN'S ETERNAL KING,  
 The Saint, the Father, and the Husband prays :  
 Hope 'springs exulting on triumphant wing,'  
 That thus they all shall meet in future days :  
 There ever bask in uncreated rays,  
 No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,  
 Together hymning their Creator's praise,  
 In such society, yet still more dear :  
 While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

{ Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,  
 In all the pomp of method and of art,  
 When men display to congregations wide,  
 Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart !

The pow'r, incens'd, the pageant will desert,  
 The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole ;  
 But, haply, in some cottage far apart,  
 May hear, well pleas'd, the language of the soul ;  
 And in His book of life the inmates poor enrol.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way ;  
 The youngling cottagers retire to rest :  
 Their Parent-pair their secret homage pay,  
 And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,  
 That HE, who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,  
 And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,  
 Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,  
 For them and for their little ones provide ;  
 But, chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these, old Scotia's grandeur springs,  
 That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad :  
 Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,  
 " An honest man's the noblest work of GOD ;"  
 And certes, in fair virtue's heav'nly road,  
 The cottage leaves the palace far behind ;  
 What is a lordling's pomp ? a cumbrous load,  
 Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,  
 Studied in arts of Hell, in wickedness refin'd !

O Scotia ; my dear, my native soil !  
 For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent !  
 Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil,  
 Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content !  
 And, O ! may heaven their simple lives prevent  
 From luxury's contagion, weak and vile !  
 Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,  
 A virtuous populace may rise the while,  
 And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd Isle.

O Thou ! who pour'd the patriotic tide  
That stream'd through Wallace's undaunted heart :  
Who dar'd to nobly stem tyrannic pride,  
Or nobly die, the second glorious part,  
(The patriot's God, peculiarly thou art,  
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward !)  
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert ;  
But still the patriot, and the patriot bard,  
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard !

Read over these quotations and judge for yourselves. In the gay, the sad, the impassioned, the tender, and the domestic, you can see his extraordinary power. There are other styles in which he also excelled. But with this we conclude. Burns, then, has lived his seven-and-thirty years, and is in his honoured grave. No great space of time is seven-and-thirty years in which to have built such a pyramid to his own fame as advancing time shall never destroy. Measure it by the ordinary duration of life, it is short ; measure it by what he might have achieved, if he had run the usual course allotted to men, and he seems cut off before he had well entered upon the course. The greatest works of almost all great men have been produced after the age of thirty-seven. If Shakspeare, Milton, Bacon, Newton, had died at that age, the world would have lost the masterpieces of their minds. Some poets who rose to fame had not even found out their powers at that time of life. Scott had not written a novel ; Cowper had not

written a poem till past forty. If Burns had been spared, what might we not have hoped? What dramas from the author of the "Jolly Beggars!" What Tyrtean strains, during the peninsular war, from the author of the "Do, or Die," of Bannockburn! But these are but idle suppositions. Let us be thankful for what we have. The feast is plentiful and varied as it is. He might have been unable to adapt himself to the wonderfully rapid changes of public taste which occurred under the pervading influence of the struggle for life and death in which all our faculties were called forth. He died, perhaps, at the right time. Death consecrated him as a classic, before he had time to wear out the subjects in which he excelled, and which it is now an anachronism in taste for any one to attempt. Think kindly of the man while you judge admiringly of the author. He was aware of his failings more keenly than the bitterest of his foes. Nobody could write such an epitaph as he composed for himself. Let bigotry look on it and relent; let the careless, the idle, the dissolute, think seriously of the sad lesson it conveys:—

Is there a whim-inspired fool,  
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,  
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,  
                Let him draw near;  
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,  
                And drap a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song,  
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,  
That weekly this area throng,

O, pass not by !  
But with a frater-feeling strong,  
Here heave a sigh.

Is there a man, whose judgment clear,  
Can others teach the course to steer,  
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career,  
Wild as the wave ;  
Here pause—and, through the starting tear,  
Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below,  
Was quick to learn, and wise to know,  
And keenly felt the friendly glow,  
And softer flame,  
But thoughtless follies laid him low,  
And stain'd his name !

Reader, attend—whether thy soul  
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,  
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,  
In low pursuit;  
Know, prudent, cautious self-control  
Is wisdom's root.

# SIR WALTER SCOTT.



PREFACE  
TO  
SIR WALTER SCOTT.

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THESE pages contain the substance of some lectures to a Mechanics' Institute on the Life and Works of Scott—a fitting supplement to a course previously delivered on the Life and Works of Burns. It has been thought that their publication would not be unacceptable to the members of similar societies as preparations for a larger acquaintance with the genius and fortunes of the two greatest Scotsmen.

*November, 1857.*



# SIR WALTER SCOTT.

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1771—1814.

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## POEMS.

BUT five-and-twenty years have elapsed since the death of Walter Scott, and yet we look back on him as if he belonged to a totally different epoch. His fame has lifted him so high above our ordinary level that we scarcely remember how short a time it is since he lived and worked among us—

“A creature not too wise or good  
For human nature’s daily food.”

The elder are apt to forget that he was our contemporary, and the younger generation never reflect on the thousands yet alive—scarcely past the prime of life—who have shaken him by the hand, and sat at his festive board, and listened to the sound of his voice, and watched the movements of that flexible and expressive countenance. But we should not let such a cloud of oblivion come between us and the object of so much love and admiration. We should not allow the repu-

tation of the author to dim our memory of the man. And with this view we will devote a few pages, quickly read and easily remembered, to the main incidents in his life, and depict him in his threefold character of Poet, Novelist, and Man. If, in the course of our narrative, the language seems tinctured with personal feeling, we must plead in extenuation the strong temptation in our path. Who that has seen can ever forget the stalwart form and friendly face of the foremost man of all his time? How many there must be in all parts of the kingdom who remember, as one of the pleasing incidents of their school or college life, how they hurried up day after day to the Parliament House to gaze with silent admiration on the grey head and bending figure of the Clerk of Session, as he rapidly filled page after page, perhaps of some legal instrument, though glorified in their eyes with the fanciful idea that it might be a chapter of some future novel. Nobody once seeing his radiant smile—hearing his cheery voice as he made some good-natured remark to playful schoolboy on his way to Duddingstone, with his skates in hand—or, on happier occasions, who was stopped in the street and kindly examined as to where he stood in the Rector's class—nobody at the time could resist the fascination of voice and manner, and we confess it is almost

impossible, even now, to view with judicial calmness the course of his life and fortunes, or to pretend to a cold impartiality which, we feel, would be ingratitude to the individual man, as well as to the instructor, the delight, and the glory of his countrymen.

This is not meant for a laboured and minute biography, and we will, therefore, not trouble the reader with many details of birth and parentage. We will only say that in the year 1771, on the 15th of August, the future poet and novelist, being the son of a respectable writer to the signet, which is Scotch for an attorney, first saw the light in his father's house, in a narrow lane in Edinburgh, called the College Wynd. In his infancy a fever attacked him, and though his life was spared, it settled on his right leg, and made him permanently lame. He attained a good height, however, and great strength, and either at walking—with the support of his stout stick—or on horseback, there were few who could keep before him. After an education at various schools, in which, though rather desultory in his studies, he managed to acquire a very considerable amount of classical information, he entered his father's office as an apprentice, and led the life common at that time among young men of his age and rank. It was remarked that though he was

unavoidably thrown among what are called hard drinkers and fast livers, he himself very seldom exceeded the bounds of the exactest propriety. In the intervals between his schools, when he was sent to the country for the benefit of fresh air, at the house of his uncle, a farmer on the Tweed, he devoted himself to reading all the books that came in his way. The ballads of the neighbourhood were filled with accounts of the Border battles between the English and Scotch. Not a square old tower but had its tale of Johnny Armstrong or Wat o' the Cleugh, and imperceptibly the boy had filled his memory with the words of these old songs, and his heart with the wild feelings and love of lawless adventure from which they originally sprang. Another circumstance, which we are apt to lose sight of after the lapse of so many years, was the strong Jacobite feeling which still lingered in those remote districts when he was a youth. Many of the old men with whom he conversed had been "out in the '45," many had seen and spoken to the Pretender, and many had witnessed the remorseless and ill-judged cruelty of the executions which took place after the insurrection was quelled. The distance of time between 1745, the year of the rebellion, and 1783, when Scott was twelve years old, was not so great as that which intervenes between Waterloo

and the present day. But Waterloo medals are still frequent. Within this year many of us may have heard accounts of the glorious battles in the Peninsula from soldiers who were present at them all. And if we consider how different such a great and agitating incident of a nation's history as an attempt to dethrone one king and set up another—the momentous struggle going on among our own countrymen and on our own soil—how different this is from a contest, however serious, and victories however great, of which the scene is far away and the actors are unknown to us, we shall perceive that the incidents of 1745 must have been remembered more freshly than many later events. So the influences which went to the formation of Walter Scott's character were strangely combined. The wild passion for active life, even though its activity was that of the freebooter of the Border—the poetic sympathy with the cause of the unfortunate Stuarts, which, of course, was accompanied by high Cavalier feelings of loyalty and obedience—these incongruous elements being further mixed up with the solemn, rigid Puritanism of his father's home, give in some degree the key to the conflicting tendencies we shall see in his after life. Add to this his bodily infirmity, which kept him from the rougher sports of youth, and made him shy and nervous

in general society as he advanced to manhood, and we shall not wonder at the earnestness with which he devoted himself to books, as his solace and companions in a world where there was apparently no opening for a person of such mental and corporeal conditions as his. Literature may well be called the friend of the unfortunate. When other friends prove false, when hopes deceive, when the spirit from any cause is driven back upon itself, literature remains true, still opens new sources of enjoyment, still pours its balm into the heart.

So the lame child was happy in his “Pilgrim’s Progress” and “Josephus’s Wars of the Jews;” and the lame youth in his more numerous volumes, with Spenser and a translated Tasso in the van; and the great poet and world-wide author was happier still in the large library at Abbotsford, where the books were piled up to the ceiling and lay in great heaps on the floor.

At the proper age—at one or two and twenty—he passed advocate, or, as it is called in England, was called to the bar. Here he made no great figure, and in the early part of his career received only one fee which was of any value. It was not in money, but in a coin less esteemed, perhaps, because it is more plentiful. It consisted of two pieces of advice. His client was a housebreaker, who was found guilty and con-

demned to be hanged. After his sentence he begged a visit from his counsel, and when he had got into the strong room of the jail, the man said to him, “I’m sorry, Mr. Scott, I’ve no money to offer you, but I’ll tell you two things that will be very useful to you when you have a house of your own. First, never keep a great big watch-dog outside the premises,—we can settle him without any trouble,—but tie a little yelping terrier within. Second, have nothing to do with nice, clever, gimerack locks. The only thing that bothers us is a huge, heavy old one, no matter how simple the construction, and the ruder and rustier the key, so much the better for a housekeeper.” Some few years after this, Scott was put under a lock and key which he was never able to pick—the lock and key matrimonial, for he was married in 1797. His appointment as Sheriff of Selkirkshire, a paid office of 300*l.* a year, compensated for his want of practice at the bar, and in peace and happiness he lived all the winter in the polished and intellectual city of Edinburgh, and spent his summers either amid the beautiful scenery of Roslin and Lasswade, or in the wilder and more picturesque district surrounding the Tweed. Children were born—friends gathered round him—fortune smiled—health was uninterrupted, and by the year 1814 he had obtained a point of

earthly happiness which few can hope for, as very few deserve. Before this time he had been appointed to another office connected with the law courts in Scotland, which yielded him a good salary; an uncle had died bequeathing him a considerable sum of money; he was a favoured guest in the halls of the great nobility, the chosen friend of gentlemen of his own rank, and loved and respected by all classes, high and low. A barrister with snug offices in the law, a citizen universally liked, a happy husband and father, a prosperous gentleman of forty-three years of age,—this was Walter Scott at the period when his life seems properly to divide itself into parts; and we will follow that natural division, and examine a little more particularly who and what he was. If we were to stop where we are and say no more about him, what should we know of Walter Scott? Yet what we have here put down is all that his minutest biographer could say to you, as to the incidents of his life as a husband, father, citizen, and friend. But how often have we the strange fact brought home to us, that man is of a double nature? That his external actions are the least characteristic of his actual self, and that in barristers, or merchants, or clergymen, or any other outside development of a man, the individual is not to be discovered, but that in his inner nature is another, a purer, a better self, independent alto-

gether of the accidents of station or profession ; that the shepherd on the hills may, like Ferguson, be a philosopher of the loftiest kind—a dusty lawyer like Walter Scott, a poet of the noblest genius. Yet so it is. And the life of such a man, it has been truly said, is written in his works ; and the building up of his intellect is to be traced with surer guidance through his writings, than that of his fortune or influence through the trials and successes of his ordinary career. We have seen the sickly boy laying in stores of legendary stories during his occasional visits for the sake of health to the banks of the Tweed. But not legendary stories alone of grim freebooters dashing across the borders and alarming the peaceful citizens of Carlisle were the food he delighted in. There were strange and supernatural tales still flying about that wild country, where ghosts and other imaginary beings made the circle of listeners draw closer round the fire, and feel a little timorous on going to bed. The first burst of the great poetic fire that had been smouldering in his heart took the lurid gloom and smoky sublime of the German poet Bürger ; and one morning Walter astonished his friends with a translation of the famous ballad “Lenore,” which certainly equals the original, and excels all other attempts which have been made at an imitation. This,

however, must be said subject to the drawbacks of the very imperfect and incorrect rhymes in which the ballad is written. As the first of his works, it may be interesting to read a little of it. The subject is the punishment of a young lady's want of submission to the decrees of Heaven, by falling into despair on the death of her lover in the Crusade. Her mother advises patience and resignation, but Helen answers:—

“ Oh ! mother, mother, what is bliss,  
     Oh ! mother, what is bale ?  
     Without my William, what were Heaven ?  
     Or with him, what were hell ?”

She retires to her couch, and at the witching hour of night she hears a horse's heavy foot upon the drawbridge. It is her dead lover come to visit her.

And hark ! and hark ! a knock—tap ! tap !  
     A rustling, stifled noise—  
     Door-latch and tinkling staples ring !  
     At length a whispering voice—

That voice is the voice of her William, who beseeches her to rise at once and mount behind him.

“ Busk, busk, and boune ! Thou mount'st behind  
     Upon my black barb steed :  
     O'er stock and stile, a hundred miles,  
     We haste to bridal bed !”



Strong love prevail'd : she busks, she bounes,  
 She mounts the barb behind,  
 And round her darling William's waist  
 Her lily arms she twined.

And now she begins the most appalling ride ever imagined, on the spectre horse, close clasping the dead rider. They go like lightning—they dash through a funeral train—and breathless and terrified the Bride perceives the unburied corpse, and the mourners all join in fearful pursuit of the wild steed she rides. They come to a desert plain in which a murderer's body is hung in irons.

“ Dost fear ? dost fear ? The moon shines clear,  
 Dost fear to ride with me ?  
 Hurrah ! hurrah ! the dead can ride ! ”  
 O William, let them be !

“ See there ! see there ! what yonder swings  
 And creaks 'mid whistling rain ? ”  
 Gibbet and steel, th' accursed wheel ;  
 A murd'rer in his chain.

“ Hollo ! thou felon, follow here :  
 To bridal bed we ride ;  
 And thou shalt prance a fetter dance  
 Before me and my bride.”

And hurry ! hurry ! clash ! clash ! clash !  
 The wasted form descends :  
 And fleet as wind through hazel bush  
 The wild career attends.

Tramp ! tramp ! along the land they rode,  
    Splash ! splash ! along the sea ;  
The scourge is red, the spur drops blood,  
    The flashing pebbles flee.

They pursue their mad career till they enter a churchyard, and come to an open grave. There the rider stops.

The falling gauntlet quits the rein,  
    Down drops the casque of steel ;  
The cuirass leaves his shrinking side,  
    The spur his gory heel ;

The eyes desert the naked skull,  
    The mould'ring flesh the bone,  
Till Helen's lily arms entwine  
    A ghastly skelcton.

The furious barb snorts fire and foam,  
    And, with a fearful bound,  
Dissolves at once in empty air,  
    And leaves her on the ground.

Some little consolation is introduced in the last stanza, where we are told the moral of the story—

E'en when the heart's with anguish cleft,  
    Revere the doom of Heav'n.  
Her soul is from her body reft,  
    Her spirit be forgiven !

But translation, at the best, is a mere exercise of ingenuity, and bears the same relation to

original composition that a dance in fetters bears to a gallop on the hill-side. Your attention is more taken up with the necessity of keeping your chain from hurting your motion, than with the necessity of getting over the ground. And it is pleasant to see how soon this great original genius gave up the fetters and took to the free air. Yet, not altogether released from the chain he had worn was the first work which he published as entirely his own. The spell of the old ballads was upon him, which made his action for awhile constrained, but the links it hung upon him were of exquisite metal, and were “musical exceedingly.” The first work that revealed that the English language could count on one great poet more was the “Lay of the Last Minstrel.” It was published in 1805, after he had greatly strengthened the favourable opinion of his antiquarian friends by the production of “Sir Tristrem,” a metrical romance, and the “Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.” How impossible it is at this period of time to enter into the feelings of the reading public, when a work so perfectly new in its style and structure was presented to their notice! Nothing had been heard for a long time but the tame correctness of Hayley and Darwin, to which had succeeded a short time before the strange and little-understood efforts of the Lake school, as it

was called, to invest the most trifling transactions of daily life with a poetic character, upon the true axiom, which, however, they had pushed to a ludicrous extreme, that truth and simplicity are the great elements of Poetry. The Sir Oracle of the *Edinburgh Review*, whom it was the fashion to praise as the best and most ingenious of critics, but whose verdicts have had the misfortune to be very generally reversed, had lost no time in showing his pitiful wit on the appearance of the lyrical ballads of Wordsworth. And now there was sent forth into the world a book of many thousand lines, which was in reality little more than a prodigious ballad, in a style far more natural, far more simple, far more withdrawn from the regular singsong of the prevailing versification than Wordsworth or Coleridge had ever ventured upon. The critics, as might be expected, were cold and dissatisfied. They fell back upon their rules and axioms—their wise saws and modern instances—talked of the inequalities in the performance, and sneered at the supernatural machinery, the necromancers and goblins of the story. But who cared for critics or criticisms? Here was a book that enthralled the reader's attention, whether he would or no, whether old or young, whether learned or ignorant. It appealed to the universal feelings. There was curiosity in the narrative, interest in

the characters, pleasure in the versification ; and the origin of it all was this. The Countess of Dalkeith had heard a curious tale of Border witchcraft, and asked the poet to make it the subject of a ballad. The materials grew on him as he extended his subject beyond the first hint of the Countess, and embraced the whole character of the time,—battles with feast and roundelay intermixed, till at last it got beyond the ballad size and became an independent poem. But how was the consolidating process to be effected, and the different parts combined into one? The happy idea struck him of a wandering Minstrel, the last of all his kind, relating the incidents of the poem to the Duchess of Buccleugh, the ancestress of the lady who had originally suggested the tale, and by this simple artifice the unity of the work is preserved.

The way was long, the wind was cold,  
The Minstrel was infirm and old ;  
His wither'd cheek and tresses gray  
Seemed to have known a better day.  
The harp, his sole remaining joy,  
Was carried by an orphan boy.  
The last of all the bards was he,  
Who sang of Border chivalry.  
For, well-a-day ! their date was fled,  
His tuneful brethren all were dead,  
And he, neglected and opprest,  
Wished to be with them, and at rest.

No more on prancing palfrey borne  
He caroll'd, light as lark at morn,  
No longer courted and caress'd,  
High placed in hall, a welcome guest,  
He poured to lord and lady gay  
The unpremeditated lay :—  
Old times were changed, old manners gone,  
A stranger filled the Stuarts' throne,  
The bigots of the iron time  
Had called his harmless art a crime !  
A wandering Harper scorned and poor,  
He begged his bread from door to door,  
And tuned to please a peasant's ear  
The harp a king had loved to hear.

But the kind eyes of the Duchess had caught sight of the Minstrel as he toiled up to the Castle of Newark, where she lived ; and after his wants were supplied, the minstrel-pride revives in the old man's heart, when he sees himself surrounded by rank and beauty, as had been his fortune in youth, and he begs permission to sing one of his ancient ditties for the entertainment of the noble circle. Permission is soon given. The bard is surrounded by the Duchess and her ladies.

And much he wish'd, yet fear'd to try  
The long-forgotten melody.  
Amid the strings his fingers stray'd,  
And an uncertain warbling made,  
And oft he shook his hoary head.  
But when he caught the measure wild  
The old man raised his face and smiled,

And lighten'd up his faded eye  
With all a poet's ecstasy!  
In varying cadence, soft or strong,  
He swept the sounding chords along,  
The present scene, the future lot,  
His toils, his wants were all forgot;  
Cold diffidence and age's frost  
In the full tide of song were lost.  
Each blank in faithless memory's void  
The poet's glowing thought supplied,  
And while his harp responsive rung,  
'Twas thus the Latest Minstrel sung.

This introduction prepares us very ingeniously for the wild and irregular measures of the succeeding poem. We have not space for long quotations from this work, and, besides, it is so common, and now so cheap, that we trust it is in everybody's hands. We will merely recal to your memory, or recommend to your attention, as the case may be, two passages, which may be taken as the most favourable specimens of the author's genius. Love and patriotism are, indeed, the commonest characteristics of poetry, but perhaps never were those two qualities more excellently brought forward in so short a space. The Minstrel, warming with his theme, opens the third canto thus:—

And said I that my limbs were old,  
And said I that my blood was cold,  
And that my kindly fire was fled,  
And my poor wither'd heart was dead,  
And that I might not sing of Love?

How could I to the dearest theme  
 That ever warm'd a Minstrel's dream  
   So foul, so false a recreant prove ?  
 How could I name Love's very name  
 Nor wake my heart to notes of flame ?

In peace Love tunes the shepherd's reed,  
 In war he mounts the warrior's steed,  
 In halls in gay attire is seen,  
 In hamlets dances on the green,  
 { Love rules the court—the camp—the grove—  
 And men below and saints above,  
 For love is heaven and heaven is love !

This will probably be satisfactory to the fairer and younger portion of our readers ; but the patriotic power of the next quotation will be appreciated by all :—

Breathes there a man with soul so dead  
 Who never to himself hath said  
   This is my own, my native land,  
 Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd  
 As home his footsteps he hath turn'd  
   From wandering on a foreign strand !  
 If such there breathe, go, mark him well,  
 For him no minstrel raptures swell ;  
 High though his titles, proud his name,  
 Boundless his wealth as wish can claim,—  
 Despite those titles, power, and pelf,  
 The wretch, concentrated all in self,  
 Living, shall forfeit fair renown,  
 And, doubly dying, shall go down  
 To the vile dust from whence he sprung  
 Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.

O Caledonia ! stern and wild,  
Meet nurse for a poetic child !  
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,  
Land of the mountain and the flood,  
Land of my sires ! what mortal hand  
Can e'er untie the filial band  
That knits me to thy rugged strand !  
Still, as I view each well-known scene,  
Think what is now, and what hath been,  
Seems as, to me, of all bereft,  
Sole friends, thy woods and streams are left ;  
And thus I love them better still,  
Even in extremity of ill.  
By Yarrow's streams still let me stray,  
Though none should guide my feeble way ;  
Still feel the breeze down Ettrick break,  
Although it chill my wither'd cheek ;  
Still lay my head by Teviot Stone,  
Though there, forgotten and alone,  
The Bard may draw his parting groan.

We may sometimes have had the misfortune to hear love of our country derided by certain persons as a selfish vanity, or more seriously objected to as narrow-minded and prejudiced. But it may be sufficient to answer those cosmopolitan gentlemen that it never has been maintained that we should love the *faults* of our country, but that we should show our regard for it by trying to remedy its imperfections—that we should not creep through life mere citizens of the world, caring nothing for the grandeur and power of England, but that we should, by

appropriating to ourselves the glories of old—Saxon independence, Norman chivalry, and British freedom—give pledges that those inestimable blessings shall be delivered undiminished to our successors, and so complete the great chain of connexion between the past and the future. Descendants of the Cavaliers may look back with pride to the patriotism of Hampden and the majestic energy of Cromwell; descendants of the Puritans may look back not without exultation to the generous loyalty of the adherents of King Charles; and the nation's heart responds to the great qualities of all her sons. It therefore does good service when a poet condenses into some glowing passage which the world “will not willingly let die,” sentiments of enthusiastic admiration of his native country. It acts as a rallying cry against the diffusive benevolence which vents itself in efforts to improve the condition of Borioboola-gha, but neglects Middlesex and Mid-Lothian; and still more against the dastardly spirit of wealthy and contented slavery, pretending to be the spirit of peace, which looks on defensive war as sinful, because it is expensive, and unnecessary, because it is not yet at our own door. These are not the sentiments which have made England what she is, or will enable her to rise to a higher position both in liberty and power.

Love thou the land with Love far brought  
From out the storied Past; and used  
Within the present and transfused  
To future time by power of thought.

But the old Minstrel has now finished his lay, the noble audience are delighted with his strain, and what is his reward? Perhaps a night's lodging, and a shilling after breakfast next morning! Ah! the Duchess of Buccleugh had a finer heart for the woes of genius.

Hush'd is the harp—the Minstrel gone,  
And did he wander forth alone?  
Alone, in indigence and age,  
To linger out his pilgrimage?  
No!—close beneath proud Newark's tower  
Arose the Minstrel's lowly bower;  
A simple hut; but there was seen  
The little garden hedged with green,  
The cheerful hearth, and lattice clean.  
There shelter'd wanderers by the blaze,  
Oft heard the tale of other days;  
For much he loved to ope the door  
And give the aid he begged before.

With the publication of the “Lay of the Last Minstrel” the poetic fame of Walter Scott may be said to have begun. Here was a man who had thrown off, with the greatest apparent facility, a work which in a ballad form had all the fire and power of an epic, with such ease of versification that it was as musical as the richest

lyric. What was not to be expected of a man who in the nineteenth century had found out a style of composition absolutely new, or at least so novel in its structure, as applied to the loftier uses of poetry, that he may be said to have had no precursor, as, we fear we must also now confess, he has had no successor. This is the greatest feat of genius, and at the present day, "when every field chirps with its grasshopper," we cannot easily realize the full importance of the deed. Every parish probably contains half a dozen fiery-hearted bards, who can string you off a hundred lines, in very good measure and cadence, about good knights and heady fights, and lofty prize from ladies' eyes; but who was he that conjured up from their forgotten graves the Border reiver, with his rude generosity, his illiterate courage, and set him on a prancing war-horse, spear in hand, helmet on head, and filled up the whole surrounding scenery with the towers and fortalices, and ruined hamlets and princely palaces of other days? The poet opened out a new world for the admiration of his time. He was the Columbus of chivalry; and now every person who chooses can take a voyage to that enchanted realm, and sing of the hawberk and habergeon, buff jerkins and aventayles, till the welkin rings again. It is as easy as travelling by railway; but the

man that invented the steam-engine, that devised the rails, that levelled the heights and filled up the valleys, he is the man to whom we ought to be thankful for the easiness of our journey. He, like Walter Scott, is the founder, not the imitator—the overcomer of difficulties, the diffuser of comfort and delight. And he is paid for it, we know, in other things than fame. Let us see how Sir Walter fared in the remuneration for his first poem. The circulation of the work in its first flush of success reached the amazing number of 44,000—a wonderful thing at that time, when we were not so reading a people, and when our numbers were barely half what they now are. The publisher's profits must have been immense; the author thought himself well paid when the first three editions brought him in 769*l.* 6*s.* But a rising poet considers all the returns for his first effort as mere surplusage, the real payment is to be expected from the next, to which its predecessor acts as an advertisement. So with double energy the successful author betook himself to his pen. He had been naturally displeased with the cold and cynic criticism of the *Edinburgh Review* and as a counterpoise to that liberal periodical, he entered very heartily into the design, if, indeed, he was not the originator of it, of starting the *Quarterly*, and the

result was that there was no Whig whom one *Review* did not uncontestedly prove to be an ass, nor any Tory whom the other allowed to have a grain of honesty or sense. And these, oh, John Bull! were your thinking machines! They read for you, judged for you, condemned for you, praised for you, and you all the while, fat, contented, pudding-headed animal! never formed an opinion of your own, but believed with the *Quarterly* that Keats and Shelley were no poets, and with the *Edinburgh*, that Wordsworth was a very old woman, and that Byron would never do? Have you more sense now? We fear not; but the result is perhaps the same as if you had, for there are more magazines, and reviews, and newspapers thinking for you; and the amalgam of the *Times* and *Daily News*, and *Blackwood* and *North British* and *Westminster*, with weeklies and fortnightlies, monthlies and dailies, and all the thousand voices of the press, gives you a very good notion of what is going on, and you would no longer think the great Napoleon a coward on the statement of the *Quarterly*, or Wellington a stunted corporal on the authority of the *Dublin Nation*.

Admirable articles from Walter Scott ennobled the pages of the new *Review*. Then he undertook editions of voluminous authors, and en-

rished them with dissertations and prefaces, which were the most valuable portions of the works. Then he began a novel—yes, in 1806 he began the novel of “Waverley,” which we will not dwell on now, as we are engaged with his development as a poet; but “Waverley” slept in his drawer, considered by himself, and the one friend he showed it to, as a failure; and his next appearance as an author was with the tale of “Marmion.” This has generally been considered his greatest poem; but as other people may be inclined to dissent from the general opinion, and cherish some private favourites of their own, we will quote some passages on which his critics found their opinion, and content ourselves with considering it his masterpiece till somebody points out to us poetry, narrative, feeling, sentiment, and description of higher quality in some other of his works.

The story of “Marmion” is so well known that we need not detail it here. Who does not remember the skill with which the double action is carried on at the opening of the poem?—the reception of Lord Marmion at Norham Castle by Sir Hugh the Heron bold, the mysterious Palmer, appointed for his guide across the Borders, who turns out to be the wronged and banished De Wilton, the lover of the Lady

Clare; and, at the same moment, the sailing of the boat across to Holy Isle, bearing the same Lady Clare to the refuge of the monastery, from the persevering advances of the wicked Marmion. And what is going on within those venerable walls? Again the tale is welded together by the fate of Constance of Beverley being dependent on her love for the hero of the poem. For his sake she has broken her vows, for his sake has sunk to the depths of crime, and even attempted the murder of her rival, Clare. And now comes the fearful ending of her career. Hers was an awful punishment, but common in Roman Catholic times. A chasm was made in the thickness of the wall, and tier by tier the culprit was built up within it, till when the last chink of the trowel sounded on the stone, and the last mortar was spread, the victim's last cry was hushed! and perhaps, as has frequently happened, when hundreds of years have passed, and the building falls in ruin, a fragile skeleton is exposed to the daylight, the ghastly relic of the sinning sister who has broken the conventional laws.

In spite of these manifold blots upon his character, Lord Marmion is still kept from the reader's contempt, and even from his hatred, by his chivalrous bearing and personal courage. There is a war-cloud spread over the whole

story, and under its shade the characters perform their parts. We feel all through that vengeance is only delayed, and when at last the armies join, and Marmion rushes madly forward to offer his services in the ranks of Surrey, we feel that the *dénouement* is at hand—a good *dénouement*, when the doom, long foreseen and relentless as the fate of the Grecian tragedy, receives its proper accomplishment, and the man of blood and violence dies by a hostile sword.

“Thanks, noble Surrey!” Marmion said,  
Nor farther greeting there he paid ;  
But parting like a thunderbolt,  
First in the vanguard made a halt,  
Where such a shout there rose  
Of “Marmion ! Marmion !” that the cry  
Up Flodden mountain shrilling high,  
Startled the Scottish foes.

Clare, in the meantime, from the point where she stood, could see nothing distinctly. She only knew that a tremendous struggle was going on beneath that canopy of smoke, and that the false Marmion and the noble De Wilton were both engaged in the fight.

At length the freshening western blast  
Aside the shroud of battle cast ;  
And, first, the ridge of mingled spears  
Above the brightening cloud appears ;  
And in the smoke the pennons flew,  
As in the storm the white sea-mew.

Then mark'd they, dashing broad and far,  
The broken billows of the war,  
And plumed crests of chieftains brave,  
Floating like foam upon the wave;

But nought distinct they see :  
Wide raged the battle on the plain ;  
Spears shook, and falchions flash'd amain ;  
Fell England's arrow-flight like rain ;  
Crests rose, and stoop'd, and rose again,

Wild and disorderly.

Amid the scene of tumult, high  
They saw Lord Marmion's falcon fly :  
And stainless Tunstall's banner white,  
And Edmund Howard's lion bright,  
Still bear them bravely in the fight :

Although against them come,  
Of gallant Gordons many a one,  
And many a stubborn Badenoch-man,  
And many a rugged Border clan,  
With Huntly, and with Home.

Far on the left, unseen the while,  
Stanley broke Lennox and Argyle ;  
Though there the western mountaineer  
Rush'd with bare bosom on the spear,  
And flung the feeble targe aside,  
And with both hands the broadsword plied,  
'Twas vain :—But Fortune, on the right,  
With fickle smile, cheer'd Scotland's fight.  
Then fell that spotless banner white,

The Howard's lion fell ;  
Yet still Lord Marmion's falcon flew  
With wavering flight, while fiercer grew  
Around the battle-yell.  
The Border slogan rent the sky !  
A Home ! a Gordon ! was the cry :

Loud were the clanging blows ;  
Advanced,—forced back,—now low, now high,  
The pennon sunk and rose ;  
As bends the bark's mast in the gale,  
When rent are rigging, shrouds, and sail,  
It waver'd 'mid the foes.  
No longer Blount the view could bear :  
“ By Heaven and all its saints I swear,  
I will not see it lost !

Fitz-Eustace, you with Lady Clare  
May bid your beads, and patter prayer,—  
I gallop to the host.”  
And to the fray he rode amain,  
Follow'd by all the archer train,  
The fiery youth, with desperate charge,  
Made, for a space, an opening large,—  
The rescued banner rose,—  
But darkly closed the war around,  
Like pine-tree, rooted from the ground,  
It sunk among the foes.  
Then Eustace mounted too :—yet staid,  
As loath to leave the helpless maid,  
When, fast as shaft can fly,  
Blood-shot his eyes, his nostrils spread,  
The loose rein dangling from his head,  
Housing and saddle bloody red,  
Lord Marmion's steed rush'd by ;  
And Eustace, maddening at the sight,  
A look and sign to Clara cast,  
To mark he would return in haste,  
Then plunged into the fight.

Ask me not what the maiden feels,  
Left in that dreadful hour alone :  
Perchance her reason stoops, or reels ;

Perchance a courage, not her own,  
Braces her mind to desperate tone.—  
The scatter'd van of England wheels;—  
She only said, as loud in air  
The tumult roar'd, “Is Wilton there?”—  
They fly, or, madden'd by despair,  
Fight but to die,—“Is Wilton there?”  
With that, straight up the hill there rode  
Two horsemen drench'd with gore,  
And in their arms, a helpless load,  
A wounded knight they bore.  
His hand still strain'd the broken brand;  
His arms were smear'd with blood and sand:  
Dragg'd from among the horses' feet,  
With dinted shield, and helmet beat,  
The falcon-crest and plumage gone,  
Can that be haughty Marmion? . . . .  
Young Blount his armour did unlace,  
And, gazing on his ghastly face,  
Said—“By Saint George, he's gone!  
That spear-wound has our master sped,  
And see the deep cut on his head!  
Good-night to Marmion.”  
“Unnurtured Blount! thy brawling cease:  
He opes his eyes,” said Eustace; “peace!”

When doff'd his easque, he felt free air,  
Around 'gan Marmion wildly stare:—  
“Where's Harry Blount? Fitz-Eustace where?  
Linger ye here, ye hearts of hare!  
Redeem my pennon,—charge again!  
Cry—‘Marmion to the rescue!’—Vain!  
Last of my race, on battle-plain  
That shout shall ne'er be heard again!—

Yet my last thought is England's—fly,  
To Daere bear my signet-ring :  
Tell him his squadrons up to bring.—  
Fitz-Eustace, to Lord Surrey hie ;  
Tunstall lies dead upon the field,  
His life-blood stains the spotless shield :  
Edmund is down :—my life is reft ;  
The Admiral alone is left.  
Let Stanley charge with spur of fire,—  
With Chester charge, and Lancashire,  
Full upon Scotland's central host,  
Or victory and England's lost.—  
Must I bid twice ?—hence, varlets ! fly !  
Leave Marmion here alone—to die.”  
They parted, and alone he lay ;  
Clare drew her from the sight away,  
Till pain wrung forth a lowly moan,  
And half he murmur'd,—" Is there none  
Of all my halls have nurst,  
Page, squire, or groom, one cup to bring  
Of blessed water from the spring,  
To slake my dying thirst ! ”

O, woman ! in our hours of ease,  
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,  
And variable as the shade  
By the light quivering aspen made ;  
When pain and anguish wring the brow,  
A ministering angel thou !—  
Scarce were the piteous accents said,  
When, with the Baron's casque, the maid  
To the nigh streamlet ran :  
Forgot were hatred, wrongs, and fears—  
The plaintive voice alone she hears,  
Sees but the dying man.

She stoop'd her by the runnel's side,  
 But in abhorrence backward drew ;  
 For oozing from the mountain's side,  
 Where raged the war, a dark-red tide  
     Was curdling in the streamlet blue.  
 Where shall she turn ?—behold her mark  
     A little fountain cell,  
 Where water, clear as diamond-spark,  
     In a stone basin fell.  
 Above, some half-worn letters say,  
 Drink. weary. pilgrim. drink. and. pray  
 For. the. kind. soul. of. Sybil. Gray.  
 Who. built. this. cross. and. well.  
 She fill'd the helm, and back she hied,  
 And with surprise and joy espied  
     A Monk supporting Marmion's head—  
 A pious man, whom duty brought  
 To dubious verge of battle fought  
     To shrieve the dying, bless the dead.

Deep drank Lord Marmion of the wave,  
 And, as she stoop'd his brow to lave—  
 “Is it the hand of Clare,” he said,  
 “Or injured Constance, bathes my head?”  
     Then, as remembrance rose,—  
 “Speak not to me of shrift or prayer !  
     I must redress her woes.  
 Short space, few words, are mine to spare ;  
 Forgive and listen, gentle Clare!”—  
 “Alas !” she said, “the while,—  
 O, think of your immortal weal !  
 In vain for Constance is your zeal ;  
     She——died at Holy Isle.”—  
 Lord Marmion started from the ground,  
 As light as if he felt no wound ;

Though in the action burst the tide,  
 In torrents, from his wounded side.  
 "Then it was truth," he said—"I knew  
 That the dark presage must be true.—  
 I would the Fiend, to whom belongs  
 The vengeance due to all her wrongs,

Would spare me but a day!

For wasting fire, and dying groan,  
 And priests slain on the altar stone,  
 Might bribe him for delay.

It may not be!—this dizzy trance—  
 Curse on yon base marauder's lance,  
 And doubly cursed my failing brand!  
 A sinful heart makes feeble hand."

Then, fainting, down on earth he sunk,  
 Supported by the trembling Monk.

With fruitless labour, Clara bound,  
 And strove to stanch the gushing wound :  
 The Monk, with unavailing cares,  
 Exhausted all the Church's prayers.  
 Ever, he said, that, close and near,  
 A lady's voice was in his ear,  
 And that the priest he could not hear

For that she ever sung,

"*In the lost battle, borne down by the flying,  
 Where mingled war's rattle with groans of the dying!"*

So the notes rung;

"Avoid thee, Fiend!—with cruel hand,  
 Shake not the dying sinner's sand!—  
 O look, my son, upon yon sign  
 Of the Redeemer's grace divine;

O think on faith and bliss!—  
 By many a death-bed I have been,  
 And many a sinner's parting seen,  
 But never aught like this."—

The war, that for a space did fail,  
Now trebly thundering swell'd the gale,  
    And STANLEY! was the cry ;—  
A light on Marmion's visage spread,  
    And fired his glazing eye :  
With dying hand above his head,  
He shook the fragment of his blade,  
    And shouted “Victory!—  
Charge, Chester, charge ! On, Stanley, on !”  
Were the last words of Marmion.

It is by a great effort we tear ourselves away from the hurry and dash of the author's writings, his heady fights and knightly careers, to the comparatively dull life of Mr. Walter Scott. The author is eclipsed by his work. But here was a great treasure added to the literature of his country, and the voice of that simple-looking gentleman will go sounding on from generation to generation, with a music to which many hearts will bound exultingly,—gathering strength, perhaps, by the lapse of years, and alive and present to the affections of men when Edinburgh, his own romantic town, shall be a heap of dust. “Marmion” had a great success, and was rapidly followed by the “Lady of the Lake,” “Rokeby,” the “Bridal of Triermain,” and other poems. Of these the “Lady of the Lake” achieved at first, and still retains, the foremost place. This also was a style of composition absolutely new. Many authors have attained a certain amount of

reputation by local or descriptive poems. Denham and Crowe have celebrated their respective hills amid the applause of the judicious few who could appreciate the difficulty of bringing poetic language to the description of a particular scene. But in neither of these poems was there more than a mere enumeration of the beauties of the landscape, and a reproduction in words of what many thousands had seen before their eyes, but Walter Scott threw himself with the boldness of an exploring colonist into the trackless wilds and tangled wildernesses of the least known parts of Scotland. A mere chronicle of the hills, and woods, and lakes, and valleys that constitute that wondrous district would have been nothing more than a very delightful guide-book through the hitherto undiscovered land, but he peopled the glades and islands with beautiful maidens, and gallant warriors, and chivalrous kings, and combined a faithful transcript of the natural beauties of the scenery with a romantic tale, which was felt at once to give an interest to the Trosachs which they could never otherwise have attained. Thousands soon began their pilgrimage to the wild and picturesque land which lay within a day's journey of their homes. Rocks and caves were pointed out as the spots named by the poet; pathways were identified as those traversed by James Fitz-James; native

appellations were discarded, and took new designations from the incidents of the tale. There was Roderick Dhu's level, and Ellen's Isle. There never has been such an instance of literary power in giving to airy nothing a local habitation and a name. He made the whole land populous with his fictitious characters, and persons of real flesh and blood were not slow to follow the example, and fix their habitations where so many lofty and noble personages were for ever settled. Thousands of travellers every year penetrated into the recesses of Benvenue, and gazed on “Ben-An with forehead bare.” Inns were built for their accommodation, roads were levelled, and carriages placed at their command. Villages clustered in nooks and corners, and at last Romance had to fight the terrible battle with Reality, which always ends in the victory of Fact. The popularity of the region destroyed its claims to farther favour—for who could continue to dream dreams of Ellen Douglas in her skiff, when he was wafted to the scene of her aquatic exertions in a steam-boat, and effected the passage from Loch Katrine to Loch Lomond in an omnibus licensed to carry thirteen inside passengers and seven out. But the great result is still patent and undeniable, that the poem of “The Lady of the Lake” enriched and civilized the neighbourhood it de-

scribed, and was far more useful to the trade and cultivation of that part of the Highlands than if it had been the wisest treatise on agriculture and commerce. Let us open the book, and see how these miracles came to pass.

Looking back to the district between Callender and the shores of Loch Lomond when Scott first made its acquaintance, we see it in all respects the same in external features as it must have been at the remoter period when the incidents of the poem occurred. Nature maintained her solitary reign equally at both dates. The story begins in the time of the gay and generous, but sometimes stubborn and cruel, James the Fifth. The disguises in which his Majesty was accustomed to mingle with the meanest of his subjects had been the burden of many ballads—some of which have been attributed to the royal adventurer himself—but he never played so noble a part as in “The Lady of the Lake.” He has been led in pursuit of a deer far beyond the usual bounds. He has entered into the wild recesses and rocky defiles of the Trosachs for the first time. His followers, beaten by the length and difficulties of the ride, have long drawn rein, the hounds are tired, and at last the gallant grey bestrode by the King falls dead; and, after struggling onward on foot, he finds himself alone on the banks of

the Lake of the Caterans, or robbers—an ominous name, now softened into Loch Katrine. He blows his horn, in hopes of recalling some stragglers of his train—

But scarce again his horn he wound,  
When lo ! forth starting at the sound,  
From underneath an aged oak,  
That slanted from the islet rock,  
A dams<sup>e</sup>l guider of its way,  
A little skiff shot to the bay,  
That round the promontory steep  
Led its deep line in graceful sweep,  
Eddying, in almost viewless wave,  
The weeping willow twig to lave,  
And kiss with whispering sound and slow,  
The beach of pebbles bright as snow.  
The boat had touched the silver strand,  
Just as the Hunter left his stand,  
And stood conceal'd amid the brake,  
To view this Lady of the Lake.  
The maiden paused, as if again  
She thought to catch the distant strain.  
With head up-raised, and look intent,  
And eye and ear attentive bent,  
And locks flung back, and lips apart,  
Like monument of Grecian art,  
In listening mood, she seem'd to stand,  
The guardian Naiad of the strand.  
And ne'er did Grecian chisel trace  
A Nymph, a Naiad, or a Grace,  
Of finer form, or lovelier face !  
What though the sun, with ardent frown,  
Had slightly tinged her cheek with brown,—  
The sportive toil, which, short and light,  
Had dyed her glowing hue so bright,

Served too in hastier swell to show  
Short glimpses of a breast of snow :  
What though no rule of courtly grace  
To measur'd mood had train'd her pace,—  
A foot more light, a step more true,  
Ne'er from the heath-flower dash'd the dew ;  
E'en the slight harebell raised its head,  
Elastic from her airy tread :  
What though upon her speech there hung  
The accents of the mountain tongue,—  
Those silver sounds, so soft, so dear,  
The list'ner held his breath to hear !

The lady thus beautifully described takes the unknown visitor into the boat, and they arrive at the island

Where for retreat in danger's hour  
Some chief had framed a rustic bower..

He finds it, like the hall of the fine old English gentleman, all hung around with lances, guns, and bows ; and, among other weapons, he perceives a sword of extraordinary size, which suddenly fell from the antler on which it usually hung, and lay on the floor at their feet.

The wondering stranger round him gazed,  
And next the fallen weapon raised ;  
Few were the arms whose sinewy strength  
Sufficed to stretch it forth at length.  
And as the brand he poised and sway'd,  
“ I never knew but one,” he said—  
“ Whose stalwart arm might brook to wield  
A blade like this in battle-field.”

The “stalwart arm” was that of the chief of the Douglases, whom James had banished from Scotland on pain of death. But the Knight’s thoughts take a different direction, when

The mistress of the mansion came,  
Mature of age, a graceful dame ;

and he is called on to inform the ladies of his name and quality. His father’s name was James, and Snowdoun is the poetic appellation of Stirling, where he lived ; so he calls himself James Fitz-James, the Knight of Snowdoun,

Lord of a barren heritage,  
Which his brave sires, from age to age,  
By their good swords had held with toil.

He tells them how he had missed his way when hunting with Lord Moray’s train, and tries to discover, in return for his openness, the name and state of Ellen’s father.

Each hint the Knight of Snowdoun gave,  
Dame Margaret heard with silence grave ;  
Or Ellen, innocently gay,  
Turn’d all inquiry light away :—  
“Weird women we ! by dale and down  
We dwell, afar from tower and town.  
We stem the flood, we ride the blast,  
On wandering knights our spells we cast ;  
While viewless minstrels touch the string,  
’Tis thus our charmed rhymes we sing.”  
She sung, and still a harp unseen  
Fill’d up the symphony between.

## SONG.

“ Soldier, rest ! thy warfare o'er,  
     Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking ;  
     Dream of battled fields no more,  
         Days of danger, nights of waking.  
     In our isle's enchanted hall,  
     Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,  
     Fairy streams of music fall,  
         Every sense in slumber dewing.  
     Soldier, rest ! thy warfare o'er,  
     Dream of fighting fields no more :  
     Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking,  
     Morn of toil, nor night of waking.

“ No rude sound shall reach thine ear,  
     Armour's clang, or war-steed champing,  
     Trump nor pibroch summon here  
         Mustering clan, or squadron tramping.  
     Yet the lark's shrill fife may come  
     At the day-break from the fallow,  
     And the bittern sound his drum,  
         Booming from the sedgy shallow.  
     Ruder sounds shall none be near,  
     Guards nor warders challenge here,  
     Here's no war-steed's neigh and champing,  
     Shouting clans or squadrons stamping.”

She paused—then, blushing, led the lay  
     To grace the stranger of the day.  
     Her mellow notes awhile prolong  
     The cadence of the flowing song,  
     Till to her lips in measured frame  
     The minstrel verse spontaneous came.

*Song continued.*

“ Huntsman, rest ! thy chase is done ;  
 While our slumbrous spells assail ye,  
 Dream not, with the rising sun,  
 Bugles here shall sound reveillé.  
 Sleep ! the deer is in his den ;  
 Sleep ! thy hounds are by thee lying ;  
 Sleep ! nor dream in yonder glen,  
 How thy gallant steed lay dying.  
 Huntsman, rest ! thy chase is done,  
 Think not of the rising sun,  
 For at dawning to assail ye,  
 Here no bugles sound reveillé.”

The King, half enamoured and altogether delighted with Ellen Douglas, leaves the Isle on the following morning; and we are admitted into other secrets of the story by the convenient loquacity of an old harper, who cautions his fair mistress not to offend her cousin—son of the Lady Margaret—the revengeful Sir Roderick Vich Alpine Dhu, by her preference of the young and powerless Malcolm Græme. But Love laughs at harpers as well as at wiser men.

Rather will Ellen Douglas dwell  
 A votaress in Maronnan’s cell ;  
 Rather through realms beyond the sea,  
 Seeking the world’s cold charity,  
 Where ne’er was spoke a Scottish word,  
 And ne’er the name of Douglas heard ;  
 An outcast pilgrim will she rove,  
 Than wed the man she cannot love !

Black Roderick, the descendant of Alpine, is not long of making his appearance to prosecute his suit in person. A gallant fleet of boats, glittering with streamer and pennant, comes across the Lake. Pipers are playing, rowers keep time to the music, and as they near the shore, a hundred voices are raised in a triumph song in honour of the Chief. Roderick looks round in vain for the form of Ellen Douglas among the ladies fair and young who have accompanied his mother to receive him at the landing. She has stolen away in her light shallop, for she has heard her father's signal-horn on the mainland.

Some feelings are to mortals given,  
With less of earth in them than heaven ;  
And if there be a human tear  
From passion's dross refined and clear,  
A tear so limpid and so meek,  
It would not stain an angel's cheek ;  
'Tis that which pious fathers shed  
Upon a duteous daughter's head !  
And as the Douglas to his breast  
His darling Ellen closely press'd,  
Such holy drops her tresses steep'd  
Though 'twas a hero's eyes that weep'd.  
Nor while on Ellen's faltering tongue  
The filial welcomes crowded hung,  
Mark'd she that fear (affection's proof)  
Still held a graceful youth aloof;  
No ! not till Douglas named his name,  
Although the youth was Malcolm Græme.

With Malcolm Græme, however, the Douglas and his daughter return to the island bower. Roderick is not delighted with his new guest, but Highland hospitality cannot be withdrawn, even from a rival. After the dinner, Roderick communicates bad news to his assembled friends. The King has pacified the Southern borders with fire and sword, and has come, it is reported, to execute the same dread justice on the inhabitants of the Highlands. Under pretence of hunting the deer, he wormed himself into the confidence of the chiefs of the Tweed and Yarrow, and hung them over the gates of their own fortresses, and he will use the same stratagem, and wreak the same vengeance, on the chieftains of the Western clans. Douglas also has been recognised in Glenfinlas—and what is to be done? Ellen is terrified. Douglas counsels submission, and proposes to retire to some still more secret hiding-place, to leave Roderick at liberty to apply for pardon to the King. But the blood of the Highland ruler is on fire—he swears he will never yield, but will celebrate his marriage with Ellen with a bonfire of a hundred villages, and a shout that shall startle James in the towers of Stirling Castle. Douglas, however, is firm, and declares that his daughter cannot be his-bride, for he perceives that her heart is no longer her own to give. Roderick has perceived it too, and in a moment fixes on

the fortunate possessor of the prize. Nothing can restrain his furious wrath, not so much the offspring of injured affection as of offended pride.

Then Roderick from the Douglas broke—  
As flashes flame through sable smoke,  
Kindling its wreaths, long, dark, and low,  
To one broad blaze of ruddy glow,  
So the deep anguish of despair  
Burst, in fierce jealousy, to air.  
With stalwart grasp his hand he laid  
On Malcolm's breast and belted plaid :  
“ Back, beardless boy !” he sternly said,  
“ Back, minion ! hold'st thou thus at nought  
The lesson I so lately taught ?  
This roof, the Douglas, and that maid,  
Thank thou for punishment delay'd.”  
Eager as greyhound on his game,  
Fiercely with Roderick grappled Græme.  
“ Perish my name, if aught afford  
Its chieftain safety save his sword !”  
Thus as they strove, their desperate hand  
Gripped to the dagger or the brand,  
And death had been—but Douglas rose,  
And thrust between the struggling foes  
His giant strength :—“ Chieftains, forego !  
I hold the first who strikes my foe.—  
Madmen, forbear your frantic jar !  
What ! is the Douglas fall'n so far,  
His daughter's hand is doom'd the spoil  
Of such dishonourable broil !”  
Sullen and slowly, they unclasp,  
As struck with shame, their desperate grasp,  
And each upon his rival glared,  
With foot advanced, and blade half bared.

Ere yet the brands aloft were flung,  
Margaret on Roderick's mantle hung,  
And Malcolm heard his Ellen's scream,  
As falter'd through terrific dream.  
Then Roderick plunged in sheath his sword,  
And veil'd his wrath in scornful word :  
“ Rest safe till morning ; pity 'twere  
Such cheek should feel the midnight air !  
Then mayest thou to James Stuart tell,  
Roderick will keep the lake and fell,  
Nor lackey, with his freeborn clan,  
The pageant pomp of earthly man.  
More would he of Clan-Alpine know,  
Thou canst our strength and passes show.—  
Malise, what ho !”—his henchman came ;  
“ Give our safe-conduct to the Græme.”  
Young Malcolm answer'd, calm and bold,  
“ Fear nothing for thy favourite hold ;  
The spot an angel deign'd to grace,  
Is bless'd, though robbers haunt the place,  
Thy churlish courtesy for those  
Reserve, who fear to be thy foes.  
As safe to me the mountain way  
At midnight as in blaze of day,  
Though with his boldest at his back,  
Even Roderick Dhu beset the track.—  
Brave Douglas,—lovely Ellen,—nay,  
Nought here of parting will I say.  
Earth does not hold a lonesome glen  
So secret, but we meet agen.—  
Chieftain ! we too shall find an hour,”—  
He said, and left the silvan bower.

Old Allan follow'd to the strand,  
(Such was the Douglas's command,)

And anxious told, how, on the morn,  
The stern Sir Roderick deep had sworn,  
The Fiery Cross should circle o'er  
Dale, glen, and valley, down, and moor.  
Much were the peril to the Graeme,  
From those who to the signal came ;  
Far up the lake 'twere safest land,  
Himself would row him to the strand.  
He gave his counsel to the wind,  
While Malcolm did, unheeding, bind,  
Round dirk and pouch and broadsword roll'd,  
His ample plaid in tighten'd fold,  
And stripp'd his limbs to such array,  
As best might suit the watery way,—

Then spoke abrupt : “ Farewell to thee,  
Pattern of old fidelity ! ”  
The Minstrel's hand he kindly press'd,—  
“ O ! could I point a place of rest !  
My sovereign holds in ward my land,  
My uncle leads my vassal band ;  
To tame his foes, his friends to aid,  
Poor Malcolm has but heart and blade.  
Yet, if there be one faithful Graeme,  
Who loves the chieftain of his name,  
Not long shall honour'd Douglas dwell,  
Like hunted stag, in mountain cell ;  
Nor, ere yon pride-swoll'n robber dare,—  
I may not give the rest to air !  
Tell Roderick Dhu I owed him nought,  
Not the poor service of a boat,  
To waft me to yon mountain-side.”  
Then plunged he in the flashing tide,  
Bold o'er the flood his head he bore,  
And stoutly steer'd him from the shore ;

And Allan strain'd his anxious eye,  
Far 'mid the lake his form to spy.  
Darkening across each puny wave,  
To which the moon her silver gave,  
Fast as the cormorant could skim,  
The swimmer plied each active limb ;  
Then landing in the moonlight dell,  
Loud shouted of his weal to tell.  
The Minstrel heard the far halloo,  
And joyful from the shore withdrew."

So the story is fairly launched. There is the King irritated against the Douglas, yet, in his individual capacity as Knight of Snowdoun, deeply touched by the charms and virtues of Ellen. There is the noble old father retaining still his loyalty to the monarch and his affection for the man—for he taught James his knightly accomplishments, and is proud of his pupil. There is the favoured lover, the gallant young Malcolm, and the rejected lover, the bold and lawless Roderick Dhu; and we must now see how all these personages are brought to play their parts.

The Fiery Cross is sent through all the territory subject to the patriarchal rule of the Vieh Alpine. A grizzly monk blesses with strange incantations the cross of churchyard yew; a goat is slaughtered by the chief himself in sacrifice; the external portions of the cross are set on fire, and the monk continues his prayer, and

shakes the signal of war above the crowd assembled to witness the ceremony. It is then given in charge to the swiftest runner of the clan, by him to be carried to the next station of the tribe; there it will be transferred to another kilted Achilles, swift of foot, and so on till it goes the round of the name of Alpine. The monk extinguishes the brand in running water, and curses the disobedient who will not answer the appeal.

Then Roderick, with impatient look,  
From Brian's hand the symbol took ;  
“ Speed, Malise, speed !” he said, and gave  
The crosslet to his henchman brave.  
“ The muster-place be Lanrick mead,  
Instant the time—speed, Malise, speed !”

In the first house he came to there is a funeral going on.

What woeful accents load the gale ?  
The funeral yell, the female wail !  
A gallant hunter's sport is o'er,  
A valiant warrior fights no more.  
Who, in the battle or the chase,  
At Roderick's side shall fill his place ?  
Within the hall, where torch's ray  
Supplies the excluded beams of day,  
Lies Duncan on his lowly bier,  
And o'er him streams his widow's tear.  
His stripling son stands mournful by,  
His youngest weeps, but knows not why ;  
The village maids and matrons round  
The dismal coronach resound.

But the coronach is left unheeded. The son of the dead Duncan sees the fatal cross. He grasps it, even at the side of his father's bier, says a few words of adieu to his mother, and starts off on the woful mission.

Benledi saw the Cross of Fire,  
It glanced like lightning up Strath-Ire.  
O'er dale and hill the summons flew,  
Nor rest nor pause young Angus knew ;  
The tear that gather'd in his eye  
He left the mountain-breeze to dry ;  
Until, where Teith's young waters roll,  
Betwixt him and a wooded knoll,  
That graced the sable strath with green,  
The chapel of Saint Bride was seen.  
Swoln was the stream, remote the bridge,  
But Angus paused not on the edge ;  
Though the dark waves danced dizzily,  
Though reel'd his sympathetic eye,  
He dash'd amid the torrent's roar :  
His right hand high the crosslet bore,  
His left the pole-axe grasp'd, to guide  
And stay his footing in the tide.  
He stumbled twice—the foam splash'd high,  
With hoarser swell the stream raced by ;  
And had he fall'n,—for ever there,  
Farewell Duneraggan's orphan heir !  
But still, as if in parting life,  
Firmer he grasp'd the Cross of strife,  
Until the opposing bank he gain'd,  
And up the chapel pathway strain'd.  
  
A blithesome rout, that morning tide,  
Had sought the chapel of St. Bride.

Her troth Tombea's Mary gave  
To Norman, heir of Armandave.  
And, issuing from the Gothic arch,  
The bridal now resumed their march.  
In rude, but glad procession, came  
Bonneted sire and coif-clad dame ;  
And plaided youth, with jest and jeer,  
Which snooded maiden would not hear ;  
And children, that, unwitting why,  
Lent the gay shout their shrilly cry ;  
And minstrels, that in measures vied  
Before the young and bonny bride,  
Whose downcast eye and cheek disclose  
The tear and blush of morning rose.  
With virgin step, and bashful hand,  
She held the 'kerchief's snowy band ;  
The gallant bridegroom by her side,  
Beheld his prize with victor's pride,  
And the glad mother in her ear  
Was closely whispering word of cheer.

Who meets them at the churchyard gate ?  
The messenger of fear and fate !  
Haste in his hurried accent lies,  
And grief is swimming in his eyes.  
All dripping from the recent flood,  
Panting and travel-soil'd he stood,  
The fatal sign of fire and sword  
Held forth, and spoke the appointed word :  
“ The muster-place is Lanrick mead—  
Speed forth the signal ! Norman, speed ! ”  
And must he change so soon the hand,  
Just link'd to his by holy band,  
For the fell Cross of blood and brand ?  
And must the day, so blithe that rose,  
And promised rapture in the close,

Before its setting hour, divide  
The bridegroom from the plighted bride ?  
O fatal doom !—it must ! it must !  
Clan-Alpine's cause, her Chieftain's trust,  
Her summons dread, brook no delay ;  
Stretch to the race—away ! away !

The Chieftain, in the meantime, has gone to take a farewell look at the new retreat to which the Douglas and his daughter have retired. It is a place so dark and melancholy, from the shadow of rock and tree, that it is called the Goblin's Cave. The despairing lover hears the sound of an evening hymn ascending in that dreary solitude, and passes on. He is on his way to the gathering-place. His clansmen have collected from far and wide ; the fiery cross has done its work.

A various scene the clansmen made ;  
Some sate, some stood, some slowly stray'd ;  
But most, with mantles folded round,  
Were couch'd to rest upon the ground,  
Scarce to be known by curious eye,  
From the deep heather where they lie,  
So well was match'd the tartan screen  
With heath-bell dark and brackens green ;  
Unless where, here and there, a blade,  
Or lance's point a glimmer made,  
Like glowworm twinkling through the shade.  
But, when advancing through the gloom,  
They saw the Chieftain's eagle plume,  
Their shout of welcome, shrill and wide,  
Shook the steep mountain's steady side.

Thrice it arose, and lake and fell  
Three times return'd the martial yell ;  
It died upon Bochastle's plain,  
And Silence claimed her evening reign.

Next day the clan is on the move. The prophet of the tribe has visions and dreams, and gives as the result of his inspiration that whichever party first takes the foeman's life shall be victorious. The cheek of the ferocious Roderick glows on hearing the doom, for he has tracked a spy of the enemy, and keeps such watch on him that it is impossible for him to escape. That spy is no other than the King, who cannot resist the attraction of Ellen Douglas, but, in spite of all the dangers in his path, pays her another visit in the Góblin's Cave. There he sees so much purity and so much nobleness in the girl, in the midst of her affection for Malcolm Græme, that he ceases to be her lover, and contents himself with being her friend. He gives her a ring, which he tells her will open the gates of Stirling to her at any hour, and that the King is under such obligations to him, that at sight of the ring he will grant whatever favour the wearer of it requires. Saying this, he departs. But not far has he gone when he encounters a poor maiden of the hills, whose mind has become crazed from the cruelty and desertion of Roderick Dhu. While she sings her sad songs, and engages

James's attention with her melancholy ravings, the clansman who has been set to watch him with the express purpose of drawing the first blood, and so fulfilling the prophecy, draws his bow. The arm is up to the point, when Blanche of Devan, by an involuntary motion, springs towards the King; the shaft comes hissing from the bow, and sinks deep into her breast. James, in a moment, has his sword at the murderer's throat, stabs him with grim delight, and returns to the dying girl.

She sate beneath the birchen tree,  
Her elbow resting on her knee;  
She had withdrawn the fatal shaft,  
And gazed on it, and feebly laugh'd;  
Her wreath of broom and feathers grey,  
Daggled with blood, beside her lay.  
The knight to stanch the life-stream tried,—  
“Stranger, it is in vain!” she cried.  
“This hour of death has given me more  
Of reason's power than years before;  
For, as these ebbing veins decay,  
My frenzied visions fade away.  
A helpless injured wretch I die,  
And something tells me in thine eye,  
That thou wert mine avenger born.—  
Seest thou this tress?—O! still I've worn  
This little tress of yellow hair,  
Through danger, frenzy, and despair!  
It once was bright and clear as thine,  
But blood and tears have dimm'd its shine.  
I will not tell thee when 'twas shred,  
Nor from what guiltless victim's head—

My brain would turn!—but it shall wave  
Like plumage on thy helmet brave,  
Till sun and wind shall bleach the stain,  
And thou wilt bring it me again.—  
I waver still.—O God! more bright  
Let reason beam her parting light!—  
O! by thy knighthood's honour'd sign,  
And for thy life preserved by mine,  
When thou shalt see a darksome man,  
Who boasts him Chief of Alpine's Clan,  
With tartans broad, and shadowy plume,  
And hand of blood, and brow of gloom,  
Be thy heart bold, thy weapon strong,  
And wreak poor Blanche of Devan's wrong!  
They watch for thee by pass and fell . . .  
Avoid the path . . . O God! . . . farewell."

James cut a lock of Blanche's hair, and mixing it with the tress she had given him, steeped them both in the maiden's blood, and wore them as a cognizance on his bonnet. But how was he to escape from the wilderness into which he had found his way? The issues were all beset, his enemies on the search after him in all directions, and he was now exhausted and fatigued. He came to the embers of a watchfire, before which was seated a gigantic Highlander. Their colloquy is very short. James professes his enmity to Roderick Dhu, and the Gael retorts by telling him he is a clansman of that chief. Yet though there is thus a death feud between them, and moreover the prophecy is a strong inducement for the strong man armed to take his

enemy's life, he will not fall upon the stranger, weak and unprepared as he is ; he will lead him safe and harmless past the ford of Coilantogle, where the territory of Vich Alpine ends, and there settle the dispute between them hand to hand. The King accepts the hospitality and the challenge,—

And the brave foemen, side by side,  
Lay peaceful down, like brothers tried,  
And slept until the dawning beam  
Purpled the mountain and the stream.

Next morning the enemies commence their walk. Their conversation is far from complimentary. James accuses the Vich Alpines of rapine and wrong, of murder and robbery. The Highlander retorts with the usual argument that the Saxons had no right to come in and drive away the original inhabitants from the fertile valleys and level plains of the Lowlands, and coop them up in the barren wilds to which they had retired. The King breaks forth into outeries of rage against the cruelties and excesses of the marauders, and says:—

“ Twice have I sought Clan-Alpine's glen  
In peace ; but when I come again,  
I come with banner, brand, and bow,  
As leader seeks his mortal foe.  
For love-lorn swain, in lady's bower,  
Ne'er panted for the appointed hour,  
As I, until before me stand,  
This rebel chieftain and his band ! ”

"Have, then, thy wish!"—he whistled shrill,  
And he was answer'd from the hill;  
Wild as the scream of the curlew,  
From crag to crag the signal flew.  
Instant, through copse and heath, arose  
Bonnets and spears and bended bows;  
On right, on left, above, below,  
Sprung up at once the lurking foe;  
From shingles grey their lances start,  
The bracken bush sends forth the dart,  
The rushes and the willow-wand  
Are bristling into axe and brand,  
And every tuft of broom gives life  
To plaided warrior arm'd for strife.  
That whistle garrison'd the glen  
At once with full five hundred men,  
As if the yawning hill to heaven  
A subterranean host had given.  
Watching their leader's beck and will,  
All silent there they stood, and still.  
Like the loose crags, whose threatening mass  
Lay tottering o'er the hollow pass,  
As if an infant's touch could urge  
Their headlong passage down the verge,  
With step and weapon forward flung,  
Upon the mountain-side they hung.  
The Mountaineer cast glance of pride  
Along Benledi's living side,  
Then fix'd his eye and sable brow  
Full on Fitz-James—"How say'st thou now?  
These are Clan-Alpine's warriors true;  
And, Saxon,—I am Roderick Dhu!"

Affairs look very evil for James Fitz-James; however, he puts on a bold front, and stands

with his back to a rock, and sword in hand. Roderick Dhu is only a murderer in a knightly and gentlemanly manner, and signals to his clansmen to resume their hiding-place ; and the march is continued till Coilantogle ford is reached. James is touched with the generous forbearance of the freebooter, and assures him of the King's pardon, if he will tender his submission.

Dark lightning flash'd from Roderick's eye—  
“ Soars thy presumption, then, so high,  
Because a wretched kern ye slew,  
Homage to name to Roderick Dhu ?  
He yields not, he, to man nor Fate !  
Thou add'st but fuel to my hate :—  
My clansman's blood demands revenge.  
Not yet prepared ?—By heaven, I change  
My thought, and hold thy valour light  
As that of some vain carpet knight,  
Who ill deserved my courteous care,  
And whose best boast is but to wear  
A braid of his fair lady's hair.”—  
“ I thank thee, Roderick, for the word !  
It nerves my heart, it steels my sword ;  
For I have sworn this braid to stain  
In the best blood that warms thy vein.  
Now, truce, farewell ! and, ruth, begone !—  
Yet think not that by thee alone,  
Proud chief ! can courtesy be shown ;  
Though not from copse, or heath, or cairn,  
Start at my whistle clansmen stern,  
Of this small horn one feeble blast  
Would fearful odds against thee cast.

But fear not—doubt not—which thou wilt—  
We try this quarrel hilt to hilt.”—  
Then each at once his falchion drew,  
Each on the ground his scabbard threw,  
Each look’d to sun, and stream, and plain,  
As what they ne’er might see again ;  
Then foot, and point, and eye opposed,  
In dubious strife they darkly closed.

Ill fared it then with Roderick Dhu,  
That on the field his targe he threw,  
Whose brazen studs and tough bull-hide  
Had death so often dash’d aside ;  
For, train’d abroad his arms to wield,  
Fitz-James’s blade was sword and shield.  
He practised every pass and ward,  
To thrust, to strike, to feint, to guard ;  
While less expert, though stronger far,  
The Gael maintain’d unequal war.  
Three times in closing strife they stood,  
And thrice the Saxon blade drank blood ;  
No stinted draught, no scanty tide,  
The gushing flood the tartans dyed.  
Fierce Roderick felt the fatal drain,  
And shower’d his blows like wintry rain ;  
And, as firm rock, or castle-roof,  
Against the winter shower is proof,  
The foe, invulnerable still,  
Foil’d his wild rage by steady skill ;  
Till, at advantage ta’en, his brand  
Forced Roderick’s weapon from his hand,  
And backward borne upon the lea,  
Brought the proud Chieftain to his knee.

“Now, yield thee, or by Him who made  
The world, thy heart’s blood dyes my blade !”—

"Thy threats, thy mercy, I defy!  
Let recreant yield, who fears to die."  
—Like adder darting from his coil,  
Like wolf that dashes through the toil,  
Like mountain-cat who guards her young,  
Full at Fitz-James's throat he sprung;  
Receiv'd, but reck'd not of a wound,  
And lock'd his arms his foeman round.—  
Now, gallant Saxon, hold thine own!  
No maiden's hand is round thee thrown!  
That desperate grasp thy frame might feel,  
Through bars of brass and triple steel!—  
They tug, they strain! down, down they go,  
The Gael above, Fitz-James below.  
The Chieftain's gripe his throat compress'd,  
His knee was planted on his breast;  
His clotted locks he backward threw,  
Across his brow his hand he drew,  
From blood and mist to clear his sight,  
Then gleam'd aloft his dagger bright!—  
—But hate and fury ill supplied  
The stream of life's exhausted tide,  
And all too late the advantage came,  
To turn the odds of deadly game;  
For, while the dagger gleam'd on high,  
Reel'd soul and sense, reel'd brain and eye.  
Down came the blow! but in the heath  
The erring blade found bloodless sheath.  
The struggling foe may now unclasp  
The fainting Chief's relaxing grasp;  
Unwounded from the dreadful close,  
But breathless all, Fitz-James arose.

The characters of the story now gather more closely. The King rides back to Stirling, and in his course up the steep street of that resi-

dence, recognises the stalwart form of the Douglas, who is on his way to throw himself on the mercy of the sovereign, and obtain the release of the gallant Malcolm Græme. That chivalrous youth has been imprisoned by the revengeful monarch for giving countenance and support to his enemies ; and Ellen, remembering the ring presented to her by the Knight of Snowdoun, resolves to proceed to the Court to essay its influence on behalf of her father and her lover. The crowd recognises the Douglas, as the King had done, and increases his animosity against the representative of the hostile house by the noisy reception it gives the old warrior as he makes his appearance at the sports celebrated below the castle wall. Among other entertainments provided for the people was a deer hunt. Douglas had at his side his daughter's favourite Lufra, the fleetest hound in all the north, and on sight of the game the noble animal bounds forth, leaves the royal staghounds far behind, and tears down the deer before they are over half their course. The royal huntsman is enraged at this interference of an unlicensed pursuer, and hits it with his whip. All thoughts of submission are forgotten in a moment by the Douglas, and he strikes the offending menial to the ground. Now arises a tumult. The King is fierce and passionate, the sports are broken

up, and Douglas is consigned to watch and ward. But with the morning calm reflection came. With the morning came, also, Ellen Douglas. She is courteously received by the officers of the court, by them delivered from the rough hospitalities of the guard-room, into which she and the old family harper, Allan, had been conveyed, and, on presenting the ring to a young lord-chamberlain of the palace, is installed, as fitted the daughter of the Douglas line, "in lordly bower apart." Allan, the harper, begs to be admitted to an interview with his chief, and by mistake is conveyed to a dreary apartment where sighing his last hours away, lies, not the noble Douglas, but the wounded Roderick Dhu. Here the harper is called on by the dying man to sing once more a strain that he had often listened to with pride—a description of the victory of the Vich Alpines over the Dermid; and ere the triumph song is finished, the fiery spirit of the chieftain passes away, and the lay of battle is converted into a lament for the dead. Ellen, meanwhile, is filled with uneasy forebodings of the ills that may befall her father and Malcolm Græme, and "turns her lone heart to music" in a "Lay of the Imprisoned Huntsman." But brighter hours are at hand.

The heart-sick lay was hardly said,  
The list'ner had not turn'd her head,

It trickled still, the starting tear,  
When light a footstep struck her ear,  
And Snowdoun's graceful Knight was near.  
She turn'd the hastier, lest again  
The prisoner should renew his strain.—  
“O welcome, brave Fitz-James !” she said,  
“How may an almost orphan maid  
Pay the deep debt”—“O say not so !  
To me no gratitude you owe.  
Not mine, alas ! the boon to give,  
And bid thy noble father live ;  
I can but be thy guide, sweet maid,  
With Scotland's King thy suit to aid.  
No tyrant he, though ire and pride  
May lay his better mood aside.  
Come, Ellen, come ! 'tis more than time—  
He holds his court at morning prime.”  
With beating heart, and bosom wrung,  
As to a brother's arm she clung :  
Gently he dried the falling tear,  
And gently whisper'd hope and cheer ;  
Her faltering steps half led, half staid,  
Through gallery fair, and high arcade,  
Till, at his touch, its wings of pride  
A portal arch unfolded wide.

Within 'twas brilliant all and light,  
A thronging scene of figures bright ;  
It glow'd on Ellen's dazzled sight,  
As when the setting sun has given  
Ten thousand hues to summer even,  
And from their tissue, fancy frames  
Aerial knights and fairy dames.  
Still by Fitz-James her footing staid ;  
A few faint steps she forward made,

Then slow her drooping head she raised,  
And fearful round the presence gazed ;  
For him she sought, who own'd this state,  
The dreaded Prince, whose will was fate.  
She gazed on many a princely port,  
Might well have ruled a royal court ;  
On many a splendid garb she gazed,  
Then turn'd bewilder'd and amazed,  
For all stood bare ; and, in the room,  
Fitz-James alone wore cap and plume.  
To him each lady's look was lent ;  
On him each courtier's eye was bent ;  
Midst furs, and silks, and jewels sheen,  
He stood, in simple Lincoln green,  
The centre of the glittering ring,—  
And Snowdoun's Knight is Scotland's King !

As wreath of snow, on mountain-breast,  
Slides from the rock that gave it rest,  
Poor Ellen glided from her stay,  
And at the Monarch's feet she lay ;  
No word her choking voice commands,—  
She show'd the ring—she clasp'd her hands.  
O ! not a moment could he brook,  
The generous Prince, that suppliant look !  
Gently he raised her ; and, the while,  
Check'd with a glance the circle's smile ;  
Graceful, but grave, her brow he kiss'd,  
And bade her terrors be dismiss'd :—  
“ Yes, Fair, the wandering poor Fitz-James  
The fealty of Scotland claims.  
To him thy woes, thy wishes, bring ;  
He will redeem his signet ring.  
Ask nought for Douglas ; yester even,  
His Prince and he have much forgiven ;

Wrong hath he had from slanderous tongue—  
 I, from his rebel kinsmen, wrong.  
 We would not, to the vulgar crowd,  
 Yield what they craved with clamour loud ;  
 Calmly we heard and judged his cause,  
 Our council aided, and our laws.  
 I stanch'd thy father's death-feud stern  
 With stout De Vaux and Grey Glencairn ;  
 And Bothwell's Lord henceforth we own  
 The friend and bulwark of our Throne.—  
 But, lovely infidel, how now ?  
 What clouds thy misbelieving brow ?  
 Lord James of Douglas, lend thine aid :  
 Thou must confirm this doubting maid.”

Then forth the noble Douglas sprung,  
 And on his neck his daughter hung.  
 The monarch drank, that happy hour,  
 The sweetest, holiest draught of Power,—  
 When it can say, with godlike voice,  
 Arise, sad Virtue, and rejoice !  
 Yet would not James the general eye  
 On Nature's raptures long should pry ;  
 He stepp'd between—“ Nay, Douglas, nay,  
 Steal not my proselyte away !  
 The riddle, 'tis my right to read,  
 That brought this happy chance to speed.  
 Yes, Ellen, when disguised I stray  
 In life's more low but happier way,  
 'Tis under name which veils my power ;  
 Nor falsely veils—for Stirling's tower  
 Of yore the name of Snowdoun claims,  
 And Normans call me James Fitz-James.  
 Thus watch I o'er insulted laws,  
 Thus learn to right the injured cause.”

Then, in a tone apart and low,—  
“ Ah, little traitress ! none must know  
What idle dream, what lighter thought,  
What vanity full dearly bought,  
Join’d to thine eye’s dark witchcraft, drew  
My spell-bound steps to Benvenue,  
In dangerous hour, and all but gave  
Thy monarch’s life to mountain glaive !”—  
Aloud he spoke—“ Thou still dost hold  
That little talisman of gold,  
Pledge of my faith, Fitz-James’s ring—  
What seeks fair Ellen of the King ? ”

Full well the conscious maiden guess’d  
He probed the weakness of her breast ;  
But, with that consciousness, there came  
A lightening of her fears for Græme,  
And more she deem’d the monarch’s ire  
Kindled ’gainst him, who for her sire,  
Rebellious broadsword boldly drew ;  
And, to her generous feeling true,  
She craved the grace of Roderick Dhu.  
“ Forbear thy suit :—the King of kings  
Alone can stay life’s parting wings :  
I know his heart, I know his hand,  
Have shared his cheer, and proved his brand—  
My fairest earldom would I give  
To bid Clan Alpine’s Chieftain live !—  
Hast thou no other boon to crave ?  
No other captive friend to save ? ”  
Blushing, she turn’d her from the King,  
And to the Douglas gave the ring,  
As if she wish’d her sire to speak  
The suit that stain’d her glowing cheek.—  
“ Nay, then, my pledge has lost its force,  
And stubborn justice holds her course.

Malcolm, come forth!"—and, at the word,  
Down kneel'd the Græme to Scotland's Lord.  
“ For thee, rash youth, no suppliant sues,  
From thee may Vengeance claim her dues,  
Who, nurtured underneath our smile,  
Hast paid our care by treacherous wile,  
And sought, amid thy faithful clan,  
A refuge for an outlaw'd man,  
Dishonouring thus thy loyal name.—  
Fetters and warder for the Græme!”—  
His chain of gold the King unstrung,  
The links o'er Malcolm's neck he flung,  
Then gently drew the glittering band,  
And laid the clasp on Ellen's hand.

This, then, is the “Lady of the Lake,” a poem not so high in its quality as “Marmion,” but containing a more interesting story, and dearer to the hearts of the poet's countrymen, as more exclusively devoted to Scottish scenery and adventure. But at this period, 1814, when he was almost saturated with praise and honour, there appeared a short advertisement, which probably made no sensation at the time, but which, it is not too much to say, altered the state of literature throughout the world, and repaid a thousandfold the fame which his country bestowed upon the author by the glory he won for it. Scotland, which was unknown to the greater part of Europe, except as a barren district to the north of England, in which only thistles and metaphysics flourished to any extent,

became almost a second father-land to the readers of Walter Scott, wherever they were placed. This was the advertisement :—“ Shortly will be published, in three volumes, a novel, called ‘Waverley: or, ’Tis Sixty Years Since.’ ” No name was given, and people probably looked on with the same equanimity as if it had been the notice of a house to be sold, or a servant wanting a place. We who trace the effects of it may wonder at the apathy with which it was received, as the German students were amazed at the listlessness with which the peasants of the Black Forest observed, or rather did not observe, the source of the Danube. But both in due time were recognised in their full proportions. The mighty cities upon its banks gave fame and glory to the river, and called attention to the brooklet in which it begins ; and the works that followed in quick succession from the same hand invest with curious interest the column of the *Scots Magazine* for 1st February, 1814, in which the approaching publication was announced.

## SIR WALTER SCOTT.

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1814—1819.

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### NOVELS.

WITH this modest and memorable advertisement, then, a new career began—a career from which, whether in his character of man or author, many valuable lessons may be learned. For Scott's is not one of the prodigious intellects like Newton's, so raised above ordinary sympathies by the loftiness of the matters it deals with as to impress us merely with bewilderment and awe; nor is his period so remote, like Chaucer's, as to involve his personal feelings in the obscurity of a totally different state of life and manners; nor is he, fortunately, like Shakspeare—the nearest akin to him of all the great of old—so neglected in his individual capacity during life and shortly after his decease, as to make it impossible to recal the shades of character, the shape of feature, the tone of voice. He is of ourselves, and still speaks to us like an elder brother of the joys and sorrows, the thoughts and sentiments of the nineteenth century, the

richest both in intellect and action of all the centuries of human life. And now we have followed him to the turning point of his history, the year which was also the turning point of the history of Europe. For in this year the Allied Armies entered Paris,—Napoleon said adieu to France amid the tears of his soldiers at Fontainebleau, and was quietly biding his time in the breathing-ground of Elba. Did Scott, whose warlike spirit broke forth in song while the world was convulsed from end to end with trumpet and drum, instinctively feel that “the piping times of peace,” which he fondly looked to as in store for mankind, required a different style of literature as well as a new order of society? The wild ballad note, which was never wholly absent in the most elaborate of his poems, seemed in perfect accordance with the national shouts of triumph for Talavera and Vittoria; and yet there was a contrast between the past and present in the most military of his lays, which kept them from the degradation of being merely gazettes in rhyme. They appealed to the roused feelings of the nation by the clanking of Border broadswords and marshalling of hostile ranks under Edward and The Bruce.—But men’s minds were now to take a different direction. The olive was again to grow, and the voice of the turtle dove to be heard in our land. The passions,

however, which were aroused by the war were not to be neglected or deprived of wholesome nutriment. Men who had watched with breathless anxiety the evolvement of the great tragedy of the time—the rise of the Revolution, and the appearance on the stage of the mighty spirit who was both the child and master of that tremendous paroxysm—could not sink into the calmness and uniformity of a dull, eventless Peace without a shock to their usual modes of thought. What was to supply the fearful anxiety which occurred in the reception of intelligence from abroad? The mute thankfulness with which the news of the continued safety of the army was received, and the electric shock which ran from end to end of all this sea-girt isle when the particulars of some great battle came to hand—when people could not read the description of the action through tears of pride and joy, and the list of killed and wounded was also rendered illegible by tears which were hardly bitter in the midst of so much glory and sympathy with the bereaved. Minds accustomed to these agitations required food for expectation and hope, and sometimes even for grief. They required to be stirred and excited. The spasmodic energy of Byron was not enough; for nobody in his secret heart ever took the slightest interest in Giaours and Corsairs, or even in

Parisinas and Eastern brides. Scott saw the exact opening, and filled it. Rhyme and Gramary were dismissed, as more fitted to be the ornaments of a period which had the solid facts of a great war already in its possession, facts which far transcended in magnitude and unexpectedness all that poetry could feign ; and a new scene was opened out, not so world-embracing as the march to Moscow, or the gigantic catastrophe at Leipsic, but working on the same feelings of surprise, excitement, novelty, personal interest, and profound development of character ; and the novel, such as Scott made it, supplied the aching void caused by the cessation of the war.

We will revert to this subject when the experiment of turning the old vehicle of fictitious narrative to nobler use had been fairly tried and had succeeded ; but just now we will go back to where we left the expectant author shortly after the appearance of "Marmion," and the advertisement of "Waverley, or 'Tis Sixty Years Since."

What a prosperous man he has been till this time ! Fortune has seemed never tired of pouring her gifts into his lap ; not to such an extent as to lift him out of his sphere, but with sufficient freeness to set him above all domestic anxieties. His poems sold at great prices—his contribu-

tions to periodical publications were numerous and well paid—his income from the law and other sources was now upwards of two thousand a-year, and as he saw before him a long career of literary labour and pecuniary reward, he gave way to the first stirrings of ambition which had entered into his heart—an ambition which seems the most widely-spread and earliest entertained—the ambition to be owner of some land. From the days of Horace, who wished, as the summit of felicity, for a farm of moderate extent, to the youthful Pope, who considered no man so happy as one who lived retired on his own ground, this seems to have been the hope of all the cultivators of the muse; and Walter Scott had other inducements unknown to the old Roman and the modern Englishman. Both in Rome and in England it was possible for a man to take rank among the highest of his countrymen without any territorial possession. The reason is that in those two countries law was so strong and property so secured that opulence might consist in other things besides the actual soil. A Roman might be rich in a pension from the Emperor, secured on some Oriental town; he might be rich in houses in the capital, and even in the slaves whom he had purchased or brought up. In England commerce had established her rights at an early period. The

princely merchants associated on terms almost of greater equality than to-day with the nobles of the kingdom. Their fortunes in bales of goods, in ships and warehouses, were as secure as the castle of the peer, or the palace of the King. But in Scotland, till a much later date, the case was very different. There was little or no foreign trade, property was insecure, traffic even in towns was very limited. The country, without internal activity, without skilful agriculture, without manufactures, was too poor to support its inhabitants, and the Scottish younger sons had either to settle down as hangers-on of their elder brothers, in a generation or two to sink among the peasantry of the land; or to emigrate to foreign climes, with a pair of broad shoulders and a good steel sword, seeking out for battles and quarrels, as more civilized people did for silks, spices, or other articles of exchange; and therefore, it is evident that there was no external sign of independence to the persons who remained at home, except the possession of a piece of land. But it was not only that, in the absence of trade, of learned professions, of realized fortunes, there was no other outward sign of independence; there was actually no safety for any sort of property which it was possible to carry away. There was not a noble in Scotland, from the Duke of Hamilton to the smallest

baron, who wouldn't have stripped his neighbour of any goods or chattels which it was possible to seize. Let us remember what happened to a gallant French noble and his men, at a time when England was comparatively civilized and governed by law, or at least by feelings of honesty and honour. There was a war carried on between France and England, and Scotland, as usual, took part with the foreign king. To the Douglas, who commanded the Scottish array, there were sent by the French King a thousand men-at-arms, under the command of a famous captain of those times, whose wealth was equal to his fame. He came over in a silver cuirass—his reins were studded with silver—there were jewels on the heft of his sword. His men, who were almost all gentlemen, were armed also with great magnificence. Their saddle-cloths were of silk, embroidered in gold; their spurs were silver, their horses large and handsome, as befitted such cavaliers. So much wealth had never been seen before; the amount of it seemed fabulous to the impoverished warriors of the North. So Douglas, determining not to let such a booty escape, enters into an agreement with the other leaders of the host to get possession of it; and the splendid auxiliaries sent by the French King are stripped of horses and arms, which were amicably divided between the

honourable allies, and, in a wretched condition, the knights of Touraine and Burgundy are embarked in miserable transports at Leith, and sent out of the country penniless and half-starved. The tales of Freebooters and “Minions of the Moon,” who revelled in the Forest of Sherwood in the reign of King John, and had long been looked on in this country as the legendary, almost mythical records of a state of society before the establishment of law or government, were but the sober transcript of every-day life on the borders of the Highlands of Scotland. The outlaw, as he is now called, as a milder form of expression for thief and robber, came down from his hills with a dozen hungry Caterans in his train, and levied his contributions on the peaceful inhabitants of the Lowlands with the dignity of a potentate collecting his annual taxes. Rob Roy, the representative of this class, was alive and well in the lifetime of many persons with whom Scott must have conversed; and so recently had property been recognised to have either its duties or its rights, that it is related of a Duke of Buccleugh, that when with very bad taste he twitted some person with the lowness of his birth, and stated that he was the grandson of a butcher, “True,” replied the gentleman thus accused, “but there’s no great difference between your Grace and me

in that respect, for your ancestors *stole* the cattle, and mine *killed* them." What chance was there for any possession except the broad acres and the strong square tower in a land like this? The feeling lasted long after the circumstances which gave rise to it were utterly changed. After bank-stock became as safe as a ploughed field—after commerce had poured into the land the treasures of the East and West, and a Glasgow cotton-spinner could sign a cheque for a million at a time, nobody considered himself to rank with the gentry unless he could tack to his surname the name of a few acres of land. He was called by that name, and not by his own; it was a sort of nobility, with the title at the wrong end; and Messrs. Brown, Jones, and Robinson, who were perhaps looked down on as nobodies when they answered to those modest appellations, had nothing to do but go into the Highlands, and buy two or three rocky mountains, and they were immediately received into the recognised aristocracy of the land, when they were called after their newly-acquired possessions, Fasnagoscleck, Buctambrucket, and Sughnagrimmel.

So Walter Scott determined, now that his name was of some weight in the book-market, to ennable himself in the approved fashion of his country. When he had just entered upon

life, and was only famous in the narrow circle of his personal friends for his antiquarian researches, his father and he, in travelling to the Tweed, came upon a certain tract of poor and marshy land, extending from the bank of the river to a rising ground, which had been famous in Border history as the scene of the last battle between the rival families of Buccleugh and Elliot on the one side, and the Douglases, Homes, and Kerrs on the other. "We must get out," said the father, "and see the spot, for it is quite in your way, Walter." It *was* quite in Walter's way, for it had the Tweed in front, the Eildon hills in the rear, and Melrose Abbey, which from the earliest period had been the theme of legendary songs, within a few miles. What thoughts possessed his mind while he toiled up the ascent and inspected the scene of the combat it is impossible to say, nor how long he cherished his father's observation; but when the time came, he bought about a hundred acres of this estate, consisting of very barren land, and a miserable farm-house. There was a neglected cabbage-garden at one side, a frightful old barn at the other, and altogether it was so undrained, so overrun with weeds, so intersected with puddles and morasses, that it was universally known throughout the district by the name of the Clarty, or dirty, Hole. But as we have just

seen, a man in Scotland takes the name of his property, and Clarty Hole would have been a most unpleasant appellation, so he searched about, and at one extremity of the narrow strip of land he had purchased he discovered there was an old ford which had taken name from the Abbot of Melrose, and in a moment the hitherto landless author took rank in all country affairs as Abbotsford. He began a house there—such a house!—all ins and outs, and gable-ends, and turrets, and bartizans—a perfect miniature of a feudal mansion, but on too small a scale; for what is very fine in the grand proportions of Warwick Castle or Ragland loses its effect when reduced to the proportions of an inch to the foot. But it served its purpose. It gave him occupation—it was a romance in stone and lime. As his fortunes grew his house extended, the domain round it increased; the impossibility of his doing without a few fields that would exactly round his territory, made the possessors of them raise their value, till on house and estate he had laid out a sum of money which would have placed him in possession of a mansion ten times more comfortable and a property four times as good. But no other situation could have given him half the pleasure. He composed it, as it were, and read it over with unfailing delight. He made it a museum of antiquities, a *memoria tech-*

*nica* for all the dates and incidents of the Borders. The hall was very narrow and not long, but he hung it round with “ helm and hawberk’s twisted mail,” and painted its roof with the coats of arms of most of the families in the county. He hung strange things on pegs all round. The keys of the prison which had been taken away in the Porteous Riots, the sword of the Pretender, a spur of Cromwell, and memorials of as many distinguished men as he could collect. He bought these relics and curiosities everywhere, and at any price. At a roup, or auction, near Selkirk, there was to be sold among other things the iron skull-cap of one of the mosstroopers of the olden time. An old woman had gone there to buy some kitchen ware, and, among other things, a boiler, of which she stood in need. Walter Scott was at the sale, and bade a pound, two, three, four, and, at last, five, for the cap of the ancient freebooter. “ Woe’s me!” cried the woman; “ what’s the use o’ my trying to buy the boiler, when Abbotsford gives five pounds for an old porridge-pot. I’ll no waste my time staying here another minute!” and she went away without the boiler she came for. He travelled in search of these accredited relics. It may be suspected that if he found any flaw in the genealogy of an old helmet he supplied it from the stores of his imagination, and then

believed in it with unwavering faith. Like the Irish monk who showed the sword of Balaam, he was never at a loss. When that worthy ecclesiastic was reminded that Balaam had no sword, and only wished for one wherewith he might slay the ass, "Och! and that's very true," said the monk; "well, this is the sword he wished for." If any one had told Sir Walter that the rusty old claymore he was so proud of had never hung by the side of Balfour of Burley, "Ah! very well," he would, perhaps, have said; "but it would have fitted him excellently if it had."

But collecting curiosities is the most expensive of amusements, except buying and reclaiming barren land, and building mediæval houses, and Walter Scott was doing all three. Where did the money come from? His income, liberal as it was, would have failed in supplying a tenth part of his expenditure. But the secret of his resources was this. There were two brothers in Edinburgh of the name of Ballantyne, both very clever men, who had started some years before this as printers and publishers. When Scott disagreed on some subject with the house of Constable, he transferred his patronage to these two brothers. All went on as favourably as could be desired. They were both of sanguine temperament, but neither of them of very accu-

rate business habits. Their prosperity was so evident, and their power of representing their circumstances in the most favourable light so great, that Scott thought he was securing a great addition to his income when he entered into secret partnership with the firm, and obtained not only great prices for his books as author, but shared the profits of the printer and bookseller. He had no practical knowledge of mercantile affairs, and relied on the truthfulness of his partners, and on the wonderful accounts of success conveyed to him by the younger brother, John. This was an astonishingly clever fellow at everything but the carrying on of his trade. He was an admirable mimic, and used to have Scott at his supper parties to meet Mathews the comedian, and always left it undecided which was the best companion. Then he sang admirably, and hunted wherever hounds or foxes were to be heard of, and drank prodigious quantities of whisky, and, in fact, was such a pleasant, merry, lively, thoughtless creature that it was impossible to be angry with him whatever he did. He used to send balance-sheets to Abbotsford, wherein all the losses were omitted, and almost all the amount of the sales taken as yearly profits. So Scott, with his eyes shut, as befitted a sleeping partner, went on spending large sums of money, in reliance that

his pen and his share in the business were covering them all. But when 1813 came, the country was exhausted with taxation. We spent upwards of a hundred millions that year in armies, and fleets, and subsidies. There was a crisis in the moneyed world, and week after week Johnnie Ballantyne sent out obligations for his partner's signature ; hurried off men on horseback to receive cheques on the bank to meet bills which had either not been provided for, or had come back dishonoured. All this time, you are to remember, the connexion of Scott with the firm was utterly unknown. It would have been degradation to the advocate, the Clerk of Session, the Sheriff of the county, the Lord of Abbotsford, to have connected himself with trade ; but the eyes of the bewildered poet were at last opened to the precipice he stood on. He determined, with the usual manliness of his character, to face all the difficulties of his position. He paid all the money he had in hand, sold all the stock for which he could find a purchaser, got the Duke of Buccleugh's guarantee for 4000*l.*, and wound up the affairs of the partnership, as far as regarded the bookselling portion of the concern, leaving James Ballantyne in possession of the printing trade, and the facetious Johnnie betaking himself to the congenial profession of an auctioneer. The copyrights of Scott's works

were likewise preserved to him, and, on the whole, he got out of this entanglement on easier terms than he had hoped. But what was now to be done? There seemed an end to the golden mine he had discovered, and yet his expenses went on. He looked one day in the old drawer, where the novel he had begun in 1806 had lain so long neglected. He read what was finished of it, thought it had been unjustly condemned,—worked at it in the intervals of what he thought more serious labour, and in 1814 published it without his name. The profits were to be shared, after payment of the expenses, between him and Constable, the publisher. There had never been so effective a book since literature began. It divided the nation's attention with the last terrible winding up of the great revolutionary war. Napoleon at Elba was almost forgotten in the adventures of Waverley at Tully Veolan or among the Highland retainers of Vich Ian Vohr. Most people knew in a moment whose hand had drawn the bow and sped the arrow. Jacobitism elevated into a sentiment, shrewd humour, wonderful description, and manly pathos, who could it be but Walter Scott? The *Edinburgh Review* was again at its ancient devices, and found great fault with the carelessness of style and the length of some of the scenes. But it ungrudgingly bestowed great

praise on the interest of the story and the diversity of character. The *Quarterly* took up the volumes with condescension, and laid them down with contempt. The Tory critic found no good thing in them from beginning to end. The English was loose and incorrect, the Scotch was a jargon which he could only describe as “a dark dialogue of Anglified Erse” or Gaelic. The secret, probably, of this depreciating notice is, that Constable, the publisher of the book, was publisher also of the rival Review, and the anonymous author was accordingly set down as a Whig. It is a pleasant thing that in our improved state of literary judgment we are neither Whigs nor Tories, and can come to an unbiassed decision founded solely on the merits of a book, and not on the politics of its author.

Certain rules have been laid down to guide our judgments on the merits of the different kinds of literary labour, and by none with more clearness than the author of “Tom Jones,” who had the boldness to set up a standard—and that a very high one—by which he was himself to be measured. But people cannot be forced to applaud according to rule. They may take the critic’s word that a work is perfect, and yawn over every page. The best rule, in short, for coming to a decision on the worth of a story is to observe whether we are delighted with it or

not. Nobody in shutting the “Vicar of Wakefield” ever entered into a disquisition with himself on the causes of his enjoyment, or whether it was composed in exact accordance with the rules and regulations in that case made and provided. Yet there are certain broad lines which every one must draw in order to define the limits within which a particular class of literature must be retained. The novel, for instance, is very different from the romance, though in common speech they are very frequently confused. A romance is a fictitious narrative, in which either the groundwork or the incidents are such as could not possibly be real, but in which, the foundation being once granted, or the incident once received, the rest of the composition is to be in strict keeping with itself. In “The Castle of Otranto,” as an example, grant the supernatural, and the waving of the helmet-plume in the courtyard is nothing that startles us as incredible, or offends us as ridiculous. In “Amadis de Gaul,” the moment we give our faith to the powers of Urganda the Unknown, the adventures depending on her skill become natural and interesting. Even in “Cinderella” we have only to believe in that delightful old fairy, and the coach-and-six and the fine clothes for the ball follow as matters of course. Mrs. Radcliffe has been famous for many years as a

writer of romance, but her works, properly speaking, are not romances. Schedonis and other tremendous figures appear at the ends of long galleries, where there is no door of entrance, and disappear in enormous corridors from which there is no exit, chains rattle in subterranean caverns; and shrieks are heard in deserted towers, but we soon discover that the Italian comes into the gallery by a hole in the wall, and disappears from the corridor by an opening in the floor. The chains are shaken, and the shrieks uttered by imprisoned ladies,—and all the supernatural is explained away, till the reader is ashamed of having been frightened by pretended apparitions, like a candle in a hollow turnip.

Very different from this is the novel. The novel is a fictitious narrative also, but limited to possible, or even to probable events—interesting us by the evolvement of character and the sequence of incidents, and appealing far more to the sympathy, the memory, and the observation of the reader than to his imagination. Imagination is of course so far appealed to that we are asked to project our minds into the scenes laid before us by the author's fancy; we are asked to make acquaintance with people we never heard of in ordinary life; we are forced to become deeply mixed up in all their feelings, and are as much pleased with the rewards

bestowed on the good, and the punishments that are assigned to the undeserving, as if we were reading the proceedings of a court of justice. These books do not achieve their success, as the romance does, by leading us into unknown ways, and forcing us to imagine sights and sounds which the author cannot possibly describe, but leaves the shadowy outline to be filled up by ourselves. In the writings of the novelists of the present day—however they differ in other respects—we equally find this one characteristic, that the personages presented to our notice are real men and women, cast, it may be, into strange and complicated adventures, but yet such as are likely enough to have befallen them in the circumstances they are placed in, and in which they behave in the manner to be expected from what we are told of their dispositions. This is the triumph of fictitious narrative, and this, also, is the use of invented incident and fancied character well supported. It is not everybody that has time to read the ponderous historians of all lands and times, and to cull maxims of thought and action from the heroic and noble examples presented to them there. In fact, the magnanimity of kings and emperors —about whom history is principally concerned—has little in common with our ordinary feelings, for we have no community of thought or situa-

tion with such distinguished individuals. It is, therefore, better for us to have a repertory of examples more intimately connected with our own circumstances and position. We may not, for instance, have historical information enough to know how an unscrupulous and ambitious potentate, by dint of soft speeches and lying pretences, may hoodwink his adversaries till his point is gained ; but there are few of us who are not put on our guard against unprincipled manœuvrers of lower rank by the incidents that befel poor Moses, the Vicar of Wakefield's son, when he was imposed on with the gross of green spectacles. We may not know, from the fate of many citadels starved into surrender, that a supply of provisions is the main element of safety both to man and beast,—but few people who have studied the proceedings of Dugald Dalgetty will forget how indispensable it is on all occasions to victual the garrison. The absurdity of buying articles of inferior quality merely because they are cheap may not be proved to most people by the disquisitions of Adam Smith, or illustrated by the conduct of nations taking possession of useless territory merely because they could have it at no expense ; but the purchaser of cheap cloth learns a lesson he will not easily forget from the adventure of Bailie Nicol Jarvie, who in falling down a precipice,

while on a visit to Rob Roy, was only saved from death by his coat tails catching on a thorn, and holding him suspended—in terror, but in safety—over the abyss of Loch Lomond. If it hadn't been for his good broadcloth, says the Bailie, he would have been a dead man. Cheap stuff won't do to trust a man's life to.

A novel, then, may be made useful as a great collection of examples for behaviour in all situations of life. We will only add, that what romance, with its supernatural, is on one side of the legitimate novel, caricature, with its extravagances and grotesqueness, is on the other. The flying women of "Peter Wilkins," the Lilliputians and Brobdignagians of "Gulliver," are not more out of nature than Commodore Trunnion and Pipes, and many other creations of Smollett. But in him—and in the case of a far greater and more genial writer now alive, the successor and equal of Scott himself—these departures from the severe simplicity of actual fact are owing to the wealth and prodigality of their genius. The eccentricity is, indeed, more an enlargement of truth than a departure from it, as a colossal Thersites might be exact in outline and proportion, and yet, from its very size, would be considered unnatural. But the extravagances, if such they are, of Dickens and of Scott are so relieved by humour, so elevated by fine feeling,

and so wonderfully sustained when they are once invented, that it is only when you lay down the book, and feel the enchanter's power no longer upon you, that you discover with a sigh that Mark Tapley never was so uniformly hilarious, nor Mr. Toots so imperturbably indifferent, nor Caleb Balderstone so attached to his master, nor Dominie Sampson so very, very simple.

Before the appearance of "Waverley" there were few novels deserving the name. Miss Edgeworth had ventured to individualize character in a work of this kind, by introducing Irishmen speaking with an Irish brogue. In the "Cottagers of Glenburnie," the Scotch dialect also had been introduced. On the stage, so long ago as Shakspeare's time, old Caius, the Frenchman, had spoken broken English, and Fluellen, the Welshman, had spoken "Brave 'orts, look ye, at the bridge." But it was reserved for Walter Scott to make dialect an element of national character, for he saw that the pithiest maxim which had been current in Scotland, and had perhaps originated in the Scotch mind, would lose its force and appropriateness unless announced in the Scotch pronunciation. If you translate the sayings of Bailie Jarvie into drawing-room English they lose their humour as well as their fitness. There is something in national speech which is like colouring in paint-

ing. The outlines may be the same, but the green, and the grey, and the lilac are wanting, and we cannot tell whether the landscape be in the warm south or the icy north. But in Scott we can trace the actual country—more minute inquiries might possibly identify the very parish. But in the midst of all this, the characters are not mere machines for the enunciation of the Scottish tongue ; they are actual men, actual women ; and more than that, actual Scotch men, actual Scotch women ! What a change from the old style, where everybody talked in the same dull language, wheresoever the scene was laid ; and there was no difference made between a Scottish chief of the thirteenth century and a Bond-street dandy of the days of George the Third.

The success of "*Waverley*," we have already said, was great. It was so great that the author perceived at once that he had discovered a gold mine far richer than the one that had been closed against him by the folly of Johnnie Ballantyne. So builders were set to work, and Abbotsford sprouted year by year into larger proportions ; more land was bought, more plantations commenced. When payment was required, another novel came forth ; and the ordinary calculation now was, that a new story was worth seven or eight thousand pounds. "*Guy Mannering*" was published in 1815 ; and

though no person of any sense ever internally doubted who the writer was, it was a delicate matter to advance one's belief in speech or print. Scott stoutly denied the authorship, for what reason it is still difficult to guess. He denied the authorship, long after this, when asked the question point blank by King George the Fourth. His excuse, when the discovery came was, that any man had a right to assume an *incognito*,—that when such is the case, a doubtful answer, or a refusal to answer at all, would reveal the mystery; and that no man, not even the King, had a right to break through the veil he had spread round him, and therefore the positive denial, if wrong at all, was a wrong committed by the impertinent person who made it unavoidable. There is some casuistry here on which we will not decide. But the wondrous creations went on. Like Banquo's issue, another and another still succeeds. Professor Wilson used to say he thought Walter Scott had a set of drawers in his head, and he had nothing to do but pull one open, and there lay a novel already written. And money was found in the drawer at the same time. Noble hospitalities were administered at Abbotsford to great and small; the house was full of strangers, as well as the *élite* of his own country. And still the wonder grew at what time the works were written; for, constant in

his attentions to his guests, the host was never away from them. With the gentlemen he traversed the grounds, or rode in long cavalcade over the more distant scenery. At dinner the most charming of entertainers ; in the drawing-room full of tale and ballad, to amuse the ladies and children ; and in all things rather the idle man of high position than the most prolific author that this century has known. The secret was, that he awoke at an early hour, and lay, as he called it, “simmering” a chapter or two in bed—started into his study, wrote them out, and despatched them by a trusty hand to the post-office, addressed to James Ballantyne, before the party had assembled to breakfast ; and, come fair or foul, he never omitted the quantity of work. The result is, that, by counting the chapters in any of his novels, you will know how many days he took to write it. And the great marvel of the operation is this, that as the press went on day by day, as he wrote, he had no means of correcting or altering after the tale was once begun ; and before the last chapters were composed, the first two volumes were boarded and ready for distribution. Such was his reliance on the vastness of his memory and the fertility of his resources !

The height of his powers and of his renown was reached when, in 1819, he published the

romance of “Ivanhoe”—romance improperly called, except that the scene of it was laid in what are commonly known as romantic times—but whether properly called romance or not, certainly the loftiest effort of his genius, for in this he tried his powers against the world at large. While his scenes were laid in Scotland, it was at once conceded that within that circle none could walk but he; but in this he divested himself of all his local advantages. He threw himself into the past, with nothing to guide him in the creation of character but what was equally open to all. And it is not too much to say—for, in fact, the man best qualified to judge upon the subject has said it—he saw by the intuitive force of his own imagination a state of society then utterly unknown to our antiquarians themselves, and a sequence of facts which the laborious studies of Augustin Thierry, the historian of the Norman Conquest, have done little more than verify. No observant reader will dissent from the ingenious Frenchman’s statement, that history itself has attained new powers since the publication of that novel. It has been found that documents teach little—that eloquent philosophic sentences, with an axiom laboriously extracted as the result of twenty chapters, give very little insight into the state of thought and manners; but that the man who tries to show

to us the vicissitudes of our country must be a painter and poet as well as a cautious inquirer. He must represent, and not merely describe; he must depict and colour, and not give bare measurements and numbers. Look at Barante in French, and Macaulay in English, and see how the faculty and energy divine applied to the transactions of a nation make the personages alive, and the whole country visible to the eye. This is the result of “Ivanhoe.”

But when a great genius arises his influence is perceptible everywhere. He is transfused into his age, and conveys his spirit to future generations. Pamphlets on banking have become lively since the letters of Sir Mungo Malagrowther. Nobody writes home to his family in the dull, old-fashioned way since the publication of “Paul’s Letters to his Kinsfolk;” and even in branches of literature which he scarcely touched it is not to be denied that his inspiration is to be traced.

It is impossible to give instances of all the styles in which Sir Walter Scott excelled, but perhaps the merits which are most freely conceded to him are narrative, description, and character. In this last is of course comprehended dialogue, in which there has been no such accomplished master since Shakspeare himself.

A few short extracts will show his variety and

skill. Here is a picture of a piece of scenery, the greatest and most difficult effort of descriptive power. Other attempts at this are generally confused and indistinct. There is no aërial distance or attention to perspective; but any one who has seen a landscape by Constable or Nasmyth will recognise a kindred genius in this representation of a sylvan scene. It is the commencement of "Ivanhoe."

In that pleasant district of merry England which is watered by the river Don there extended in ancient times a large forest, covering the greater part of the beautiful hills and valleys which lie between Sheffield and the pleasant town of Doncaster. The remains of this extensive wood are still to be seen at the noble seats of Wentworth, of Wharncliffe Park, and around Rotherham. Here haunted of yore the fabulous Dragon of Wantley; here were fought many of the most desperate battles during the Civil Wars of the Roses; and here also flourished in ancient times those bands of gallant outlaws whose deeds have been rendered so popular in English song.

Such being our chief scene, the date of our story refers to a period towards the end of the reign of Richard I. when his return from his long captivity had become an event rather wished than hoped for by his despairing subjects, who were in the meantime subjected to every species of subordinate oppression. The nobles, whose power had become exorbitant during the reign of Stephen, and whom the prudence of Henry the Second had scarce reduced into some degree of subjection to the crown, had now resumed their ancient licence in its utmost extent; despising the feeble interference of the English Council of State, forti-

fying their castles, increasing the number of their dependants, reducing all around them to a state of vassalage, and striving by every means in their power to place themselves each at the head of such forces as might enable him to make a figure in the national convulsions which appeared to be impending.

The situation of the inferior gentry, or Franklins, as they were called, who, by the law and spirit of the English constitution, were entitled to hold themselves independent of feudal tyranny, became now unusually precarious. If, as was most generally the case, they placed themselves under the protection of any of the petty kings in their vicinity, accepted of feudal offices in his household, or bound themselves, by mutual treaties of alliance and protection, to support him in his enterprises, they might indeed purchase temporary repose; but it must be with the sacrifice of that independence which was so dear to every English bosom, and at the certain hazard of being involved as a party in whatever rash expedition the ambition of their protector might lead him to undertake. On the other hand, such and so multiplied were the means of vexation and oppression possessed by the great Barons, that they never wanted the pretext, and seldom the will, to harass and pursue, even to the very edge of destruction, any of their less powerful neighbours who attempted to separate themselves from their authority, and to trust for their protection, during the dangers of the times, to their own inoffensive conduct, and to the laws of the land.

A circumstance which greatly tended to enhance the tyranny of the nobility, and the sufferings of the inferior classes, arose from the consequences of the Conquest by Duke William of Normandy. Four generations had not sufficed to blend the hostile blood of the Normans and Anglo-Saxons, or to unite, by common language and mutual interests, two hostile races, one of which still felt the elation of triumph, while the other groaned under all the

consequences of defeat. The power had been completely placed in the hands of the Norman nobility by the event of the battle of Hastings, and it had been used, as our histories assure us, with no moderate hand. The whole race of Saxon princes and nobles had been extirpated or disinherited, with few or no exceptions; nor were the numbers great who possessed land in the country of their fathers, even as proprietors of the second, or of yet inferior classes. The royal policy had long been to weaken, by every means, legal or illegal, the strength of a part of the population which was justly considered as nourishing the most inveterate antipathy to their victor. All the monarchs of the Norman race had shown the most marked predilection for their Norman subjects; the laws of the chase, and many others equally unknown to the milder and more free spirit of the Saxon constitution, had been fixed upon the necks of the subjugated inhabitants, to add weight, as it were, to the feudal chains with which they were loaded. At court, and in the castles of the great nobles, where the pomp and state of a court was emulated, Norman-French was the only language employed; in courts of law the pleadings and judgments were delivered in the same tongue. In short, French was the language of honour, of chivalry, and even of justice, while the far more manly and expressive Anglo-Saxon was abandoned to the use of rustics and hinds, who knew no other. Still, however, the necessary intercourse between the lords of the soil and those oppressed inferior beings by whom that soil was cultivated occasioned the gradual formation of a dialect, compounded betwixt the French and the Anglo-Saxon, in which they could render themselves mutually intelligible to each other; and from this necessity arose by degrees the structure of our present English language, in which the speech of the victors and the vanquished have been so happily blended together, and which has since been so richly improved by importations from the classical lan-

guages, and from those spoken by the southern nations of Europe.

This state of things I have thought it necessary to premise for the information of the general reader, who might be apt to forget, that, although no great historical events, such as war or insurrection, mark the existence of the Anglo-Saxons as a separate people subsequent to the reign of William the Second, yet the great national distinctions betwixt them and their conquerors, the recollection of what they had formerly been, and to what they were now reduced, continued down to the reign of Edward the Third to keep open the wounds which the Conquest had inflicted, and to maintain a line of separation betwixt the descendants of the victor Normans and the vanquished Saxons.

The sun was setting upon one of the rich grassy glades of that forest which we have mentioned in the beginning of the chapter. Hundreds of broad-headed, short-stemmed, wide-branched oaks, which had witnessed perhaps the stately march of the Roman soldiery, flung their gnarled arms over a thick carpet of the most delicious greensward; in some places they were intermingled with beeches, hollies, and copsewood of various descriptions, so closely as totally to intercept the level beams of the sinking sun; in others they receded from each other, forming those long, sweeping vistas, in the intricacy of which the eye delights to lose itself, while imagination considers them as the paths to yet wilder scenes of sylvan solitude. Here the red rays of the sun shot a broken and discoloured light, that partially hung upon the shattered boughs and mossy trunks of the trees, and there they illuminated in brilliant patches the portions of turf to which they made their way. A considerable open space, in the midst of this glade, seemed formerly to have been dedicated to the rites of Druidical superstition; for, on the summit of a

hillock, so regular as to seem artificial, there still remained part of a circle of rough, unhewn stones, of large dimensions. Seven stood upright; the rest had been dislodged from their places, probably by the zeal of some convert to Christianity, and lay, some prostrate near their former site, and others on the side of the hill. One large stone only had found its way to the bottom, and in stopping the course of a small brook, which glided smoothly round the foot of the eminence, gave, by its opposition, a feeble voice of murmur to the placid and elsewhere silent streamlet.

The human figures which completed this landscape were in number two, partaking, in their dress and appearance, of that wild and rustic character which belonged to the woodlands of the West-riding of Yorkshire at that early period. The eldest of these men had a stern, savage, and wild aspect. His garment was of the simplest form imaginable, being a close jacket with sleeves, composed of the tanned skin of some animal, on which the hair had been originally left, but which had been worn off in so many places that it would have been difficult to distinguish, from the patches that remained, to what creature the fur had belonged. This primeval vestment reached from the throat to the knees, and served at once all the usual purposes of body-clothing; there was no wider opening at the collar than was necessary to admit the passage of the head, from which it may be inferred that it was put on by slipping it over the head and shoulders, in the manner of a modern shirt, or ancient hauberk. Sandals, bound with thongs made of boar's hide, protected the feet, and a roll of thin leather was twined artificially around the legs, and, ascending above the calf, left the knees bare, like those of a Scottish Highlander. To make the jacket sit yet more close to the body, it was gathered at the middle by a broad leathern belt, secured by a brass buckle, to one side of which was attached a sort of scrip, and to

the other a ram's horn, accoutred with a mouthpiece, for the purpose of blowing. In the same belt was stuck one of those long, broad, sharp-pointed, and two-edged knives, with a buck's-horn handle, which were fabricated in the neighbourhood, and bore even at this early period the name of a Sheffield whittle. The man had no covering upon his head, which was only defended by his own thick hair, matted and twisted together, and scorched by the influence of the sun into a rusty dark-red colour, forming a contrast with the overgrown beard upon his cheeks, which was rather of a yellow or amber hue. One part of his dress only remains, but it is too remarkable to be suppressed; it was a brass ring, resembling a dog's collar, but without any opening, and soldered fast round his neck, so loose as to form no impediment to his breathing, yet so tight as to be incapable of being removed, excepting by the use of the file. On this singular gorget was engraved, in Saxon characters, an inscription of the following purport:—"Gurth, the son of Beowulph, is the born thrall of Cedric of Rotherwood."

Beside the swineherd, for such was Gurth's occupation, was seated, upon one of the fallen Druidical monuments, a person about ten years younger in appearance, and whose dress, though resembling his companion's in form, was of better materials, and of a more fantastic appearance. His jacket had been stained of a bright purple hue, upon which there had been some attempt to paint grotesque ornaments in different colours. To the jacket he added a short cloak, which scarcely reached half way down his thigh; it was of crimson cloth, though a good deal soiled, lined with bright yellow; and as he could transfer it from one shoulder to the other, or at his pleasure draw it all round him, its width, contrasted with its want of longitude, formed a fantastic piece of drapery. He had thin silver bracelets upon his arms, and on his neck a collar of the same metal, bearing the inscription,

"Wamba, the son of Witless, is the thrall of Cedric of Rotherwood." This personage had the same sort of sandals with his companion, but, instead of the roll of leather thong, his legs were cased in a sort of gaiters, of which one was red and the other yellow. He was provided also with a cap, having around it more than one bell, about the size of those attached to hawks, which jingled as he turned his head to one side or other; and as he seldom remained a minute in the same posture, the sound might be considered as incessant. Around the edge of this cap was a stiff bandeau of leather, cut at the top into open work, resembling a coronet, while a prolonged bag arose from within it, and fell down on one shoulder like an old-fashioned nightcap, or a jelly-bag, or the head-gear of a modern hussar. It was to this part of the cap that the bells were attached; which circumstance, as well as the shape of his head-dress, and his own half-crazed, half-cunning expression of countenance, sufficiently pointed him out as belonging to the race of domestic clowns or jesters, maintained in the houses of the wealthy, to help away the tedium of those lingering hours which they were obliged to spend within doors. He bore, like his companion, a scrip attached to his belt, but had neither horn nor knife, being probably considered as belonging to a class whom it is esteemed dangerous to entrust with edge-tools. In place of these, he was equipped with a sword of lath, resembling that with which Harlequin operates his wonders upon the modern stage.

The outward appearance of these two men formed scarce a stronger contrast than their look and demeanour. That of the serf, or bondsman, was sad and sullen; his aspect was bent on the ground with an appearance of deep dejection, which might be almost construed into apathy, had not the fire which occasionally sparkled in his red eye manifested that there slumbered, under the appearance of sullen despondency, a sense of oppression, and a disposition

to resistance. The looks of Wamba, on the other hand, indicated, as usual with his class, a sort of vacant curiosity, and fidgety impatience of any posture of repose, together with the utmost self-satisfaction respecting his own situation, and the appearance which he made. The dialogue which they maintained between them was carried on in Anglo-Saxon, which, as we said before, was universally spoken by the inferior classes, excepting the Norman soldiers, and the immediate personal dependants of the great feudal nobles. But to give their conversation in the original would convey but little information to the modern reader, for whose benefit we beg to offer the following translation :

“ The curse of St. Withold upon these infernal porkers ! ” said the swineherd, after blowing his horn obstreperously, to collect together the scattered herd of swine, which, answering his call with notes equally melodious, made, however, no haste to remove themselves from the luxurious banquet of beech-mast and acorns on which they had fattened, or to forsake the marshy banks of the rivulet, where several of them, half plunged in mud, lay stretched at their ease, altogether regardless of the voice of their keeper. “ The curse of St. Withold upon them and upon me ! ” said Gurth ; “ if the two-legged wolf snap not up some of them ere nightfall, I am no true man. Here, Fangs ! Fangs ! ” he ejaculated at the top of his voice to a ragged wolfish-looking dog, a sort of lurcher, half mastiff, half greyhound, which ran limping about as if with the purpose of seconding his master in collecting the refractory grunters ; but which, in fact, from misapprehension of the swineherd’s signals, ignorance of his own duty, or malice prepense, only drove them hither and thither, and increased the evil which he seemed to design to remedy. “ A devil draw the teeth of him,” said Gurth, “ and the mother of mischief confound the Ranger of the forest, that cuts the foreclaws off our dogs, and makes them unfit for

their trade! Wamba, up and help me an thou beest a man; take a turn round the back o' the hill to gain the wind on them; and when thou'st got the weather-gage, thou mayst drive them before thee as gently as so many innocent lambs."

"Truly," said Wamba, without stirring from the spot, "I have consulted my legs upon this matter, and they are altogether of opinion that to carry my gay garments through these sloughs would be an act of unfriendship to my sovereign person and royal wardrobe; wherefore, Gurth, I advise thee to call-off Fangs, and leave the herd to their destiny, which, whether they meet with bands of travelling soldiers, or of outlaws, or of wandering pilgrims, can be little else than to be converted into Normans before morning, to thy no small ease and comfort."

"The swine turned Normans to my comfort!" quoth Gurth; "expound that to me, Wamba, for my brain is too dull, and my mind too vexed, to read riddles."

"Why, how call you those grunting brutes running about on their four legs?" demanded Wamba.

"Swine, fool, swine," said the herd, "every fool knows that."

"And swine is good Saxon," said the Jester; "but how call you the sow when she is flayed, and drawn, and quartered, and hung up by the heels, like a traitor?"

"Pork," answered the swineherd.

"I am very glad every fool knows that too," said Wamba, "and pork, I think, is good Norman-French; and so when the brute lives, and is in the charge of a Saxon slave, she goes by her Saxon name; but becomes a Norman, and is called pork, when she is carried to the Castle-hall to feast among the nobles; what dost thou think of this, friend Gurth, ha?"

"It is but too true doctrine, friend Wamba, however it got into thy fool's pate."

"Nay, I can tell you more," said Wamba, in the same

tone; “there is old Alderman Ox continues to hold his Saxon epithet while he is under the charge of serfs and bondsmen such as thou, but becomes Beef, a fiery French gallant, when he arrives before the worshipful jaws that are destined to consume him. Mynheer Calf, too, becomes Monsieur de Veau in the like manner; he is Saxon when he requires tendance, and takes a Norman name when he becomes matter of enjoyment.”

“By St. Dunstan,” answered Gurth, “thou speakest but sad truths; little is left to us but the air we breathe, and that appears to have been reserved with much hesitation, solely for the purpose of enabling us to endure the tasks they lay upon our shoulders. The finest and the fattest is for their board; the loveliest is for their couch; the best and bravest supply their foreign masters with soldiers, and whiten distant lands with their bones, leaving few here who have either will or the power to protect the unfortunate Saxon. God’s blessing on our master Cedric, he hath done the work of a man in standing in the gap; but Reginald Front-de-Bœuf is coming down to this country in person, and we shall soon see how little Cedric’s trouble will avail him.—Here, here,” he exclaimed again, raising his voice, “So ho! so ho! well done, Fangs! thou hast them all before thee now, and bring’st them on bravely, lad.”

“Gurth,” said the Jester, “I know thou thinkest me a fool, or thou wouldest not be so rash in putting thy head into my mouth. One word to Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, or Philip de Malvoisin, that thou hast spoken treason against the Norman,—and thou art but a cast-away swineherd,—thou wouldest waver on one of these trees as a terror to all evil speakers against dignities.”

“Dog, thou wouldest not betray me,” said Gurth, “after having led me on to speak so much at disadvantage?”

“Betray thee!” answered the Jester; “no, that were the trick of a wise man; a fool cannot half so well help

himself—but soft, whom have we here?" he said, listening to the trampling of several horses which became then audible.

"Never mind whom," answered Gurth, who had now got his herd before him, and, with the aid of Fangs, was driving them down one of the long dim vistas which we have endeavoured to describe.

"Nay, but I must see the riders," answered Wamba; "perhaps they are come from Fairy-land with a message from King Oberon."

"A murrain take thee," rejoined the swineherd; "wilt thou talk of such things, while a terrible storm of thunder and lightning is raging within a few miles of us? Hark, how the thunder rumbles! and for summer rain, I never saw such broad downright flat drops fall out of the clouds; the oaks, too, notwithstanding the calm weather, sob and creak with their great boughs as if announcing a tempest. Thou canst play the rational if thou wilt; credit me for once, and let us home ere the storm begins to rage, for the night will be fearful."

Wamba seemed to feel the force of this appeal, and accompanied his companion, who began his journey after catching up a long quarter-staff which lay upon the grass beside him. This second Eumæus strode hastily down the forest glade, driving before him, with the assistance of Fangs, the whole herd of his inharmonious charge.

As illustrative of his skill in sustaining character, we can refer to the interview that occurred between the dreamy, pedantic, excellent Dominie Sampson, and the queen of the gipsies, the terrible Meg Merrilies. The Dominie is passing an old ruin, the Kaim of Derncleugh, which has the reputation of being haunted, and the worthy

man is deeply immersed in all the terrifying legends that made its very name a sound of fear.

What then was his astonishment, when, on passing the door—that door which was supposed to have been placed there by one of the latter Lairds of Ellangowan to prevent presumptuous strangers from incurring the dangers of the haunted vault—that door supposed to be always locked, and the key of which was popularly said to be deposited with the presbytery—that door, that very door, opened suddenly, and the figure of Meg Merrilies, well known, though not seen for many a revolving year, was placed at once before the eyes of the startled Dominie! She stood imminently before him in the footpath, confronting him so absolutely, that he could not avoid her except by fairly turning back, which his manhood prevented him from thinking of.

“I kenn’d ye wad be here,” she said with her harsh and hollow voice: “I ken wha ye seek; but ye maun do my bidding.”

“Get thee behind me!” said the alarmed Dominie—“Avoid ye!—*Conjuro te scelestissima—nequissima—spurcissima—iniquissima—atque miserrima—conjurote!!!*”—

Meg stood her ground against this tremendous volley of superlatives, which Sampson hawked up from the pit of his stomach, and hurled at her in thunder. “Is the carl daft,” she said, “wi’ his glamour?”

“*Conjuro*,” continued the Dominie, “*abjuro, contestor, atque viriliter impero tibi!*”

“What, in the name of Sathan, are ye feared for, wi’ your French gibberish, that would make a dog sick? Listen, ye sticket stibbler, to what I tell ye, or ye sall rue it while there’s a limb o’ ye hings to anither!—Tell Colonel Mannering that I ken he’s seeking me. He kens,

and I ken, that the blood will be wiped out, and the lost will be found,

And Bertram's right, and Bertram's might,  
Shall meet on Ellangowan height.

Hae, there's a letter to him; I was gaun to send it in another way. I canna write mysel; but I hae them that will baith write and read, and ride and rin for me. Tell him the time's coming now, and the weird's dred, and the wheel's turning. Bid him look at the stars as he has looked at them before. Will ye mind a' this?"

"Assuredly," said the Dominie, "I am dubious—for, woman, I am perturbed at thy words, and my flesh quakes to hear thee."

"They'll do you nae ill though, and maybe muckle gude."

"Avoid ye! I desire no good that comes by unlawful means."

"Fule-body that thou art," said Meg, stepping up to him with a frown of indignation that made her dark eyes flash like lamps from under her bent brows,—"Fule-body! if I meant ye wrang, couldna I clod ye ower that crag, and wad man ken how ye cam by your end mair than Frank Kennedy? Hear ye that, ye worricow?"

"In the name of all that is good," said the Dominie, recoiling, and pointing his long pewter-headed walking cane like a javelin at the supposed sorceress,—"in the name of all that is good, bide off hands! I will not be handled—woman, stand off, upon thine own proper peril! —desist, I say—I am strong—lo, I will resist!" Here his speech was cut short; for Meg, armed with supernatural strength (as the Dominie asserted), broke in upon his guard, put by a thrust which he made at her with his cane, and lifted him into the vault, "as easily," said he, "as I could sway a Kitchen's Atlas."

"Sit down there," she said, pushing the half-throttled preacher with some violence against a broken chair,—"sit down there, and gather your wind and your senses, ye black barrow-tram o' the kirk that ye are—Are ye fou or fasting?"

"Fasting—from all but sin," answered the Dominie, who, recovering his voice, and finding his exorcisms only served to exasperate the intractable sorceress, thought it best to affect complaisance and submission, inwardly conning over, however, the wholesome conjurations which he durst no longer utter aloud. But as the Dominie's brain was by no means equal to carry on two trains of ideas at the same time, a word or two of his mental exercise sometimes escaped, and mingled with his uttered speech in a manner ludicrous enough, especially as the poor man shrunk himself together after every escape of the kind, from terror of the effect it might produce upon the irritable feelings of the witch.

Meg, in the meanwhile, went to a great black cauldron that was boiling on a fire on the floor, and, lifting the lid, an odour was diffused through the vault, which, if the vapours of a witch's cauldron could in aught be trusted, promised better things than the hell-broth which such vessels are usually supposed to contain. It was in fact the savour of a goodly stew, composed of fowls, hares, partridges, and moor-game, boiled in a large mess with potatoes, onions, and leeks, and from the size of the cauldron, appeared to be prepared for half a dozen people at least.

"So ye hae eat naething a' day?" said Meg, heaving a large portion of this mess into a brown dish, and strewing it savourily with salt and pepper.

"Nothing," answered the Dominie—"scelestissima!—that is—gudewife."

"Hae then," said she, placing the dish before him, "there's what will warm your heart."

"I do not hunger—*malefica*—that is to say—Mrs. Merrilie!" for he said unto himself, "the savour is sweet, but it hath been cooked by a Canidia or an Erichhoe."

"If ye dinna eat instantly, and put some saul in ye, by the bread and the salt, I'll put it down your throat wi' the cutty spoon, scalding as it is, and whether ye will or no. Gape, sinner, and swallow!"

Sampson, afraid of eye of newt, and toe of frog, tigers' chaudrons, and so forth, had determined not to venture; but the smell of the stew was fast melting his obstinacy, which flowed from his chops as it were in streams of water, and the witch's threats decided him to feed. Hunger and fear are excellent casuists.

"Saul," said Hunger, "feasted with the witch of Endor."—"And," quoth Fear, "the salt which she sprinkled upon the food sheweth plainly it is not a necromantic banquet, in which that seasoning never occurs."—"And, besides," says Hunger, after the first spoonful, "it is savoury and refreshing viands."

"So ye like the meat?" said the hostess.

"Yea," answered the Dominie, "and I give thee thanks—*sceleratissima!*—which means—Mrs. Margaret."

"Aweel, eat your fill; but an ye kenn'd how it was gotten, ye maybe wadna like it sae weel." Sampson's spoon dropped, in the act of conveying its load to his mouth. "There's been mony a moonlight watch to bring a' that trade thegither," continued Meg,—"the folk that are to eat that dinner thought little o' your game laws."

Is that all? thought Sampson, resuming his spoon, and shovelling away manfully; I will not lack my food upon that argument.

"Now, ye maun tak a dram?"

"I will," quoth Sampson—"conjurō te—that is, I thank you heartily," for he thought to himself, in for a penny, in for a pound; and he fairly drank the witch's health, in a cupful of brandy. When he had put this cope-stone upon

Meg's good cheer, he felt, as he said, "mighty elevated, and afraid of no evil which could befall unto him."

"Will ye remember my errand now?" said Meg Merillies; "I ken by the cast o' your ee that ye're anither man than when you cam in."

"I will, Mrs. Margaret," repeated Sampson, stoutly; "I will deliver unto him the sealed yepistle, and will add what you please to send by word of mouth."

"Then I'll make it short," says Meg. "Tell him to look at the stars without fail this night, and to do what I desire him in that letter, as he would wish

That Bertram's right, and Bertram's might,  
Shall meet on Ellangowan height.

I have seen him twice when he saw na me; I ken when he was in this country first, and I ken what's brought him back again. Up, an' to the gate! ye're ower lang here—follow me."

Sampson followed the sibyl accordingly, who guided him about a quarter of a mile through the woods, by a shorter cut than he could have found for himself; they then entered upon the common, Meg still marching before him at a great pace, until she gained the top of a small hillock which overhung the road.

"Here," she said, "stand still here. Look how the setting sun breaks through yon cloud that's been darkening the lift a' day. See where the first stream o' light fa's—it's upon Donagild's round tower—the auldest tower in the Castle o' Ellangowan—that's no for naething!—See as it's glooming to seaward abune yon sloop in the bay—that's no for naething neither!—Here I stood on this very spot," said she, drawing herself up so as not to lose one hair-breadth of her uncommon height, and stretching out her long sinewy arm, and clenched hand, "Here I stood, when I told the last Laird o' Ellangowan what was coming on his house—and did that fa' to the ground?—na—it hit

even ower sair!—And here, where I brake the wand of peace ower him—here I stand again—to bid God bless and prosper the just heir of Ellangowan that will sune be brought to his ain; and the best laird he shall be that Ellangowan has seen for three hundred years.—I'll no live to see it, maybe; but there will mony a blithe ee see it though mine be closed. And now, Abel Sampson, as ever ye lo'ed the house of Ellangowan, away wi' my message to the English Colonel, as if life and death were upon your haste!"

So saying, she turned suddenly from the amazed Dominie and regained with swift and long strides the shelter of the wood from which she had issued, at the point where it most encroached upon the common. Sampson gazed after her for a moment in utter astonishment, and then obeyed her directions, hurrying to Woodbourne at a pace very unusual for him, exclaiming three times, "Prodigious! prodigious! pro-di-gi-ous!"

This, if in some respects open to the charge of exaggeration—a result which must infallibly arise when distinctions of character are prominently brought forward by so marked a contrast as this—must still be acknowledged to be most dramatic and effective. As sober narrative relieved by a wonderful mixture of personal interest and characteristic discrimination, we will go to the celebrated scene in the "*Antiquary*," of Sir Arthur Wardour's escape from the rising tide. But these extracts, we must remind the reader, are merely placed before him as specimen-illustrations of the powers we have named as most strongly distinctive of Walter

Scott. There are thousands of other scenes in the long picture-gallery of his novels as fully impressed with these high qualities as those we choose; but the styles we wish to identify are more clearly defined by quotation than reference; and it is difficult to read too often such masterpieces of composition.

When this was arranged, and the emissary despatched, the knight and his daughter left the high road, and, following a wandering path among sandy hillocks, partly grown over with furze and the long grass called bent, soon attained the side of the ocean. The tide was by no means so far out as they had computed; but this gave them no alarm; there were seldom ten days in the year when it approached so near the cliffs as not to leave a dry passage. But, nevertheless, at periods of spring tide, or even when the ordinary flood was accelerated by high winds, this road was altogether covered by the sea; and tradition had recorded several fatal accidents which had happened on such occasions. Still, such dangers were considered as remote and improbable; and rather served, with other legends, to amuse the hamlet fireside, than to prevent any one from going between Knockwinnock and Monkbarns by the sands.

As Sir Arthur and Miss Wardour paced along, enjoying the pleasant footing afforded by the cool moist hard sand, Miss Wardour could not help observing, that the last tide had risen considerably above the usual water-mark. Sir Arthur made the same observation, but without its occurring to either of them to be alarmed at the circumstance. The sun was now resting his huge disk upon the edge of the level ocean, and gilded the accumulation of towering clouds through which he had travelled the livelong day, and which now assembled on all sides, like misfortunes

and disasters around a sinking empire, and falling monarch. Still, however, his dying splendour gave a sombre magnificence to the massive congregation of vapours, forming out of their unsubstantial gloom the show of pyramids and towers, some touched with gold, some with purple, some with a hue of deep and dark red. The distant sea, stretched beneath this varied and gorgeous canopy, lay almost portentously still, reflecting back the dazzling and level beams of the descending luminary, and the splendid colouring of the clouds amidst which he was setting. Nearer to the beach the tide rippled onward in waves of sparkling silver, that imperceptibly, yet rapidly, gained upon the sand.

With a mind employed in admiration of the romantic scene, or perhaps on some more agitating topic, Miss Wardour advanced in silence by her father's side, whose recently offended dignity did not stoop to open any conversation. Following the windings of the beach, they passed one projecting point or headland of rock after another, and now found themselves under a huge and continued extent of the precipices by which that iron-bound coast is in most places defended. Long projecting reefs of rock, extending under water, and only evincing their existence by here and there a peak entirely bare, or by the breakers which foamed over those that were partially covered, rendered Knockwinnock bay dreaded by pilots and shipmasters. The crags which rose between the beach and the mainland, to the height of two or three hundred feet, afforded in their crevices shelter for unnumbered sea-fowl, in situations seemingly secured by their dizzy height from the rapacity of man. Many of these wild tribes, with the instinct which sends them to seek the land before a storm arises, were now winging towards their nests with the shrill and dissonant clang which announces disquietude and fear. The disk of the sun became almost totally obscured ere he had altogether sunk

below the horizon, and an early and lurid shade of darkness blotted the serene twilight of a summer evening. The wind began next to arise; but its wild and moaning sound was heard for some time, and its effects became visible on the bosom of the sea before the gale was felt on shore. The mass of waters, now dark and threatening, began to lift itself in larger ridges, and sink in deeper furrows, forming waves that rose high in foam upon the breakers, or burst upon the beach with a sound resembling distant thunder.

Appalled by this sudden change of weather, Miss Wardour drew close to her father, and held his arm fast. "I wish," at length she said, but almost in a whisper, as if ashamed to express her increasing apprehensions, "I wish we had kept the road we intended, or waited at Monkbarns for the carriage."

Sir Arthur looked round, but did not see, or would not acknowledge, any signs of an immediate storm. They would reach Knockwinnock, he said, long before the tempest began. But the speed with which he walked, and with which Isabella could hardly keep pace, indicated a feeling that some exertion was necessary to accomplish his consolatory prediction.

They were now near the centre of a deep and narrow bay, or recess, formed by two projecting capes of high and inaccessible rock, which shot out into the sea like the horns of a crescent; and neither durst communicate the apprehension which each began to entertain, that, from the unusually rapid advance of the tide, they might be deprived of the power of proceeding by doubling the promontory which lay before them, or of retreating by the road which brought them thither.

As they pressed forward, longing doubtless to exchange the easy curving line, which the sinuosities of the bay compelled them to adopt, for a straighter and more expeditious path, though less conformable to the line of beauty,

Sir Arthur observed a human figure on the beach advancing to meet them. "Thank God," he exclaimed, "we shall get round Halket-head! that person must have passed it;" thus giving vent to the feeling of hope, though he had suppressed that of apprehension.

"Thank God, indeed!" echoed his daughter, half audibly, half internally, as if expressing the gratitude which she strongly felt.

The figure which advanced to meet them made many signs, which the haze of the atmosphere, now disturbed by wind and by a drizzling rain, prevented them from seeing or comprehending distinctly. Some time before they met, Sir Arthur could recognise the old blue-gowned beggar, Edie Ochiltree. It is said that even the brute creation lay aside their animosities and antipathies when pressed by an instant and common danger. The beach under Halket-head, rapidly diminishing in extent by the encroachments of the spring-tide and a north-west wind, was in like manner a neutral field, where even a justice of peace and a strolling mendicant might meet upon terms of mutual forbearance.

"Turn back! turn back!" exclaimed the vagrant; "why did ye not turn when I waved to you?"

"We thought," replied Sir Arthur, in great agitation, "we thought we could get round Halket-head."

"Halket-head! The tide will be running on Halket-head by this time, like the Fall of Fyers! It was a' I could do to get round it twenty minutes since—it was coming in three feet abreast. We will maybe get back by Ballyburgh Ness Point yet. The Lord help us! it's our only chance. We can but try."

"My God, my child!"—"My father, my dear father!" exclaimed the parent and daughter, as, fear lending them strength and speed, they turned to retrace their steps, and endeavoured to double the point, the projection of which formed the southern extremity of the bay.

"I heard ye were here frae the bit callant ye sent to meet your carriage," said the beggar, as he trudged stoutly on a step or two behind Miss Wardour, "and I couldna bide to think o' the dainty young leddy's peril, that has aye been kind to ilka forlorn heart that cam near her. Sae I lookit at the lift and the rin o' the tide, till I settled it that if I could get down time eneugh to gie you warning, we wad do weel yet. But I doubt, I doubt I have been beguiled! for what mortal ee ever saw sic a race as the tide is rinning e'en now? See, yonder's the Rattan's Skerry—he aye held his neb abune the water in my day—but he's aneath it now."

Sir Arthur cast a look in the direction in which the old man pointed. A huge rock, which in general, even in spring-tides, displayed a hulk like the keel of a large vessel, was now quite under water, and its place only indicated by the boiling and breaking of the eddying waves which encountered its submarine resistance.

"Mak haste, mak haste, my bonny leddy," continued the old man, "mak haste, and we may do yet! Take haud o' my arm—an auld and frail arm it's now, but it's been in as sair stress as this is yet. Take haud o' my arm, my winsome leddy! D'ye see yon wee black speck amang the wallowing waves yonder? This morning it was as high as the mast o' a brig—it's sma' eneugh now—but, while I see as muckle black about it as the crown o' my hat, I winna believe but we'll get round the Ballyburgh Ness, for a' that's come and gane yet."

Isabella, in silence, accepted from the old man the assistance which Sir Arthur was less able to afford her. The waves had now encroached so much upon the beach, that the firm and smooth footing which they had hitherto had on the sand must be exchanged for a rougher path close to the foot of the precipice, and in some places even raised upon its lower ledges. It would have been utterly impossible for Sir Arthur Wardour or his daughter to

have found their way along these shelves without the guidance and encouragement of the beggar, who had been there before in high tides, though never, he acknowledged, “in sae awsome a night as this.”

It was indeed a dreadful evening. The howling of the storm mingled with the shrieks of the sea-fowl, and sounded like the dirge of the three devoted beings, who, pent between two of the most magnificent, yet most dreadful objects of nature—a raging tide, and an insurmountable precipice—toiled along their painful and dangerous path, often lashed by the spray of some giant billow, which threw itself higher on the beach than those that had preceded it. Each minute did their enemy gain ground perceptibly upon them ! Still, however, loath to relinquish the last hopes of life, they bent their eyes on the black rock pointed out by Ochiltree. It was yet distinctly visible among the breakers, and continued to be so, until they came to a turn in their precarious path, where an intervening projection of rock hid it from their sight. Deprived of the view of the beacon on which they had relied, they now experienced the double agony of terror and suspense. They struggled forward, however ; but, when they arrived at the point from which they ought to have seen the crag, it was no longer visible. The signal of safety was lost among a thousand white breakers, which, dashing upon the point of the promontory, rose in prodigious sheets of snowy foam, as high as the mast of a first-rate man-of-war, against the dark brow of the precipice.

The countenance of the old man fell. Isabella gave a faint shriek, and “ God have mercy upon us !” which her guide solemnly uttered, was piteously echoed by Sir Arthur—“ My child ! my child !—to die such a death !”

“ My father ! my dear father !” his daughter exclaimed, clinging to him,—“ and you, too, who have lost your own life in endeavouring to save ours !”

"That's not worth the counting," said the old man. "I hae lived to be weary o' life; and here or yonder—at the back o' a dyke, in a wreath o' snaw, or in the wame o' a wave, what signifies how the auld gaberlunzie dies?"

"Good man," said Sir Arthur, "can you think of nothing?—of no help?—I'll make you rich—I'll give you a farm—I'll——"

"Our riches will be soon equal," said the beggar, looking out upon the strife of the water—"they are sae already; for I hae nae land, and you would give your fair bounds and barony for a square yard of rock that would be dry for twal hours."

While they exchanged these words, they paused upon the highest ledge of rock to which they could attain; for it seemed that any farther attempt to move forward could only serve to anticipate their fate. Here, then, they were to await the sure though slow progress of the raging element, something in the situation of the martyrs of the early church, who, exposed by heathen tyrants to be slain by wild beasts, were compelled for a time to witness the impatience and rage by which the animals were agitated while awaiting the signal for undoing their grates, and letting them loose upon the victims.

Yet even this fearful pause gave Isabella time to collect the powers of a mind naturally strong and courageous, and which rallied itself at this terrible juncture. "Must we yield life," she said, "without a struggle? Is there no path, however dreadful, by which we could climb the crag, or at least attain some height above the tide, where we could remain till morning, or till help comes? They must be aware of our situation, and will raise the country to relieve us."

Sir Arthur, who heard, but scarcely comprehended, his daughter's question, turned, nevertheless, instinctively and eagerly to the old man, as if their lives were in his gift. Ochiltree paused. "I was a bauld craigsman," he said,

"ance in my life, and mony a kittywake's and lungie's nest hae I harried up amang thae very black rocks ; but it's lang, lang syne, and nae mortal could speel them without a rope—and if I had ane, my ee-sight, and my footstep, and my hand-grip, hae a' failed mony a day sinsyne—and then how could I save *you*?—But there was a path here ance, though maybe, if we could see it, ye would rather bide where we are—*HIS* name be praised!" he ejaculated suddenly, "there's ane coming down the crag e'en now!"—Then, exalting his voice, he hilloa'd out to the daring adventurer such instructions as his former practice, and the remembrance of local circumstances, suddenly forced upon his mind :—"Ye're right—ye're right!—that gate, that gate!—fasten the rope weel round Crummie's-horn, that's the muckle black stane—cast twa plies round it—that's it!—now, weize yoursell a wee easel-ward—a wee mair yet to that ither stane—we ca'd it the Cat's-lug—there used to be the root o' an aik-tree there—that will do!—canny now, lad—canny now—tak tent and tak time—Lord bless ye! tak time.—Vera weel! Now ye maun 'get to Bessy's Apron, that's the muckle braid flat blue stane—and then, I think, wi' your help and the tow thegither, I'll win at ye, and then we'll be able to get up the young leddy and Sir Arthur."

The adventurer, following the directions of old Edie, flung him down the end of the rope, which he secured around Miss Wardour, wrapping her previously in his own blue gown, to preserve her as much as possible from injury. Then, availing himself of the rope, which was made fast at the other end, he began to ascend the face of the crag—a most precarious and dizzy undertaking, which, however, after one or two perilous escapes, placed him safe on the broad flat stone beside our friend Lovel. Their joint strength was able to raise Isabella to the place of safety which they had attained. Lovel then descended in order to assist Sir Arthur, around whom he adjusted the

rope; and again mounting to their place of refuge, with the assistance of old Ochiltree, and such aid as Sir Arthur himself could afford, he raised himself beyond the reach of the billows.

The sense of reprieve from approaching and apparently inevitable death, had its usual effect. The father and daughter threw themselves into each other's arms, kissed and wept for joy, although their escape was connected with the prospect of passing a tempestuous night upon a precipitous ledge of rock, which scarce afforded footing for the four shivering beings, who now, like the sea-fowl around them, clung there in hopes of some shelter from the devouring element which raged beneath. The spray of the billows, which attained in fearful succession the foot of the precipice, overflowing the beach on which they so lately stood, flew as high as their place of temporary refuge; and the stunning sound with which they dashed against the rocks beneath, seemed as if they still demanded the fugitives in accents of thunder as their destined prey. It was a summer night doubtless; yet the probability was slender that a frame so delicate as that of Miss Wardour should survive till morning the drenching of the spray; and the dashing of the rain, which now burst in full violence, accompanied with deep and heavy gusts of wind, added to the constrained and perilous circumstances of their situation.

"The lassie—the puir sweet lassie," said the old man; "mony such a night have I weathered at hame and abroad, but, God guide us, how can she ever win through it!"

His apprehension was communicated in smothered accents to Lovel; for, with the sort of freemasonry by which bold and ready spirits correspond in moments of danger, and become almost instinctively known to each other, they had established a mutual confidence.—"I'll climb up the cliff again," said Lovel, "there's daylight enough left to see my footing; I'll climb up and call for more assistance."

" Do so, do so, for Heaven's sake!" said Sir Arthur, eagerly.

" Are ye mad?" said the mendicant ; " Francie o' Fowlis-heugh, and he was the best craigsman that ever speel'd heugh, (mair by token he brake his neck upon the Dunbuy of Slaines,) wadna hae ventured upon the Halket-head craigs after sun-down—It's God's grace, and a great wonder besides, that ye are not in the middle o' that roaring sea wi' what ye have done already—I didna think there was the man left alive would hae come down the craigs as ye did. I question an I could hae done it mysel, at this hour and in this weather, in the youngest and yaldest of my strength—But to venture up again—it's a mere and a clear tempting o' Providence."

" I have no fear," answered Lovel ; " I marked all the stations perfectly as I came down, and there is still light enough left to see them quite well—I am sure I can do it with perfect safety. Stay here, my good friend, by Sir Arthur and the young lady."

" Deil be in my feet then," answered the Bedesman sturdily ; " if ye gang, I'll gang too ; for between the twa o' us, we'll hae mair than wark eneugh to get to the tap o' the heugh."

" No, no,—stay you here and attend to Miss Wardour—you see Sir Arthur is quite exhausted."

" Stay yoursel then, and I'll gae," said the old man ; " let death spare the green corn and take the ripe."

" Stay both of you, I charge you," said Isabella, faintly. " I am well, and can spend the night very well here—I feel quite refreshed." So saying, her voice failed her—she sunk down, and would have fallen from the crag, had she not been supported by Lovel and Ochiltree, who placed her in a posture half sitting, half reclining, beside her father, who, exhausted by fatigue of body and mind so extreme and unusual, had already sat down on a stone in a sort of stupor.

"It is impossible to leave them," said Lovel—"What is to be done?—Hark! hark!—Did I not hear a halloo?"

"The skriegh of a Tammie Norie," answered Ochiltree, "I ken the skirl weel."

"No, by Heaven," replied Lovel, "it was a human voice."

A distant hail was repeated, the sound plainly distinguishable among the various elemental noises, and the clang of the sea-mews by which they were surrounded. The mendicant and Lovel exerted their voices in a loud halloo, the former waving Miss Wardour's handkerchief on the end of his staff to make them conspicuous from above. Though the shouts were repeated, it was some time before they were in exact response to their own, leaving the unfortunate sufferers uncertain whether, in the darkening twilight and increasing storm, they had made the persons who apparently were traversing the verge of the precipice to bring them assistance, sensible of the place in which they had found refuge. At length their halloo was regularly and distinctly answered, and their courage confirmed, by the assurance that they were within hearing, if not within reach, of friendly assistance.

## SIR WALTER SCOTT.

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1819—1832.

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### SUCCESS.—MISFORTUNES.—DEATH.

IN considering the first portion of Scott's career, we viewed him chiefly as a poet. The characteristics of his genius in this department were so marked—rapid narrative, strong painting of individual men, and accurate description—that it seems strange he should ever have had the countenance to deny the authorship of the *Waverley* Novels, which are distinguished by the very same peculiarities. We did not dwell on all his poems, and we cannot now dwell on all his novels. We took “*Marmion*” and “*The Lady of the Lake*” as the crowning efforts of his poetry, and “*Ivanhoe*” as the best of his prose fictions; and having seen him acknowledged the chief writer of his time, we have now to follow him in his course, and see how, like gracious Duncan, “he bore his faculties so meek, and was so clear in his great office,” that when sorrow and affliction came upon him, the sympathy was universal and profound. No man had grudged his greatness; no man was unmoved by his misfortune.

In 1817 occurred the first serious illness which had befallen him since his childhood. It was accompanied with great pain and sickness, and, after visiting him at intervals, summoned all its strength and made an assault on the citadel in 1819. For a while even his iron frame and strength of will were subdued by this enemy, and he gave up his literary avocations. The disease increased—a sort of jaundice, accompanied with cramps—and at one time the worst apprehensions were entertained. In most illnesses there is a crisis which determines the result. In this case, when appearances reached the worst, and agony was at the greatest, he called his family round him, and took leave of them for the last time. “For myself, my dears,” he said, “I am unconscious of ever having done any man an injury, or omitted any fair opportunity of doing any man a benefit. I well know that no human life can appear otherwise than weak and filthy in the eyes of God, but I rely on the merits and intercession of our Redeemer.” He then laid his hand on their heads, and said, “God bless you! Live so that we may all hope to meet each other in a better place hereafter; and now leave me that I may turn my face to the wall.” “They obeyed him,” says his son-in-law, Mr. Lockhart; “but he presently fell into a deep sleep, and when he awoke from it

after many hours, the crisis of extreme danger was felt by himself, and pronounced by his physician, to have been overcome."

It was during his convalescence—not unvisited by frequent returns of a milder form of the attack—that he dictated the "Bride of Lammermuir" and the romance of "Ivanhoe." The "Tales of my Landlord" were also published when the public began to believe they had listened to the enchanter for the last time. And it is just possible that the ascertained state of his health, and the exaggerated reports which of course were current of the hopelessness of his condition, may have strengthened the argument of the few fantastical persons who still maintained the opinion that Scott was not the author of the novels. They did not yet know against what difficulties that great spirit could contend. The prominent feature of his character was perseverance. To write was his duty, and steady to its call, he cast all personal considerations aside. Of him, indeed, it may be said, as of the Duke of Wellington,—

Not once or twice in our fair Island story,  
The path of Duty is the way to glory.

Some of us may perhaps think that literary exertion can never be honoured with the name of duty, as exertion of other kinds—service of

our country, for instance, or energy in our profession ; but this arises from a false notion, still very common, that writing books is not a professional pursuit, and that rather it is an interference with the practical business of our lives. Certainly, if we engage a mason to build us a house, and, instead of line and rule, and mortar and trowel, he devotes himself entirely to pen and ink, and produces at the end of a year a new edition, either in prose or verse, of the “House that Jack Built,” this will be a very serious interference with his professional duties, and an unjustifiable postponement of the house he was to build for us to the house already built by Jack. If a physician, in the same way, feels our pulse, and instantly sits down and writes an ode to the memory of Queen Anne, he will probably not be called into consultation when next we are unwell. But the case was just the opposite of this as regarded Walter Scott. It was a deviation into any other pursuit than literature which was an interference with his profession ; and idle country squires, who considered him far more idle than themselves, and only thought him actively employed when they saw him planting trees at Abbotsford and carrying fences over the hills, and consulted him about the width of roads, and kept him engaged for hours and hours listening to their parochial plans and grievances,

were little aware that the tree planting, and fence building, and road widening, and parish discussions were positive intrusions on the business of his life. Many of these occupations were cheerfully undertaken by the Laird of Abbotsford, but they were looked on by himself as his relaxations and amusements, while the desk, the ream of paper, the sharp-nibbed pen, were the real tools with which he worked, the real sources of his wealth and greatness. We are not, therefore, always to consider a man idle or useless who has no signboard over his door, and no avowed calling in the eyes of the world. No tradesman with a crowded shop, no lawyer with a hundred clients, no doctor with a sick population all round him, worked so hard as the tall, grey-eyed man in the dressing-gown, who covered such numbers of pages in his small, straight, illegible, closely-written hand, and filled such cartloads of paper with the produce of his brain. But literature like this, it will be said, is only personally beneficial to the author—he gets all the money, and all he has to deduct is the price of the ink and foolscap. This is not true. He has frequently health to deduct, and to undergo a wear and tear of spirits from which the professional man is free, the hostility of critics, the variableness and uncertainty of public taste. He has to take into account the years of prepara-

tion for his work, the observation of character, the study of past events, the storing of the mind, the fund of invention he has improved and invigorated by meditation and selection. Does any one who considers the subject fully deny that the author's gains are the hardest earned of any? We hear of the profits of a distinguished living author for his brilliant volumes of English history. They were very large, no doubt, but were they exorbitant or undeserved? Each volume took him perhaps a year of actual composition, and his remuneration appears prodigious pay for a year's work; but how long did it take him to qualify himself for the writing? How long has he searched over dusty papers, and compared conflicting statements, and formed his judgment by reading all histories in all varieties of tongues? Why, his life time. Divide the sum now received by the years of preparatory work, he is as poorly paid as a curate or work-house surgeon. But the lawyer is seen in his wig and gown, the great merchant is seen in his counting-house receiving and distributing the wealth of every region of the globe; we see the active exertions of those men, and confess they deserve the reward of so much skill and labour. Walter Scott wrote in his study; the door was locked, his favourite greyhound lay upon the rug, the clock ticked over the mantelpiece, but

these were the only witnesses of his toil. Page after page fell into the heap, scribbled over from top to bottom ; the piles of manuscript rose higher and higher ; they were at last tied up in a brown paper parcel, and sent into Edinburgh by the carrier's cart. A very idle, very useless individual, leading an easy life, and most exorbitantly paid ! Now, here is a calculation to show his uselessness. It was considered by a great master of statistics at the time, that if all the persons set into motion by Sir Walter Scott's novels, and kept in occupation by them, were to be collected into one place—if all the rag merchants and paper makers, and printers and publishers, and painters and engravers, and sewers in boards and bookbinders, and booksellers and reviewers, were to form a town, it would be of immense size, and we have no doubt would be one of great wealth and industry. If to this enormous population you added all the people who have been delighted by them, or improved by them, all the people whose solitary sick room has been cheered by them, all the exiles—on the Ganges, on the Indus, on the St. Lawrence, and now we may say on the Tehernaia and the Euxine—who have been reminded of their home and home affections by them, you would have to confess that no town would hold the multitude, but that the

domain of a great author is universal, and his subjects the races of mankind. In France, in Germany, the name of Scott is a household word. Even among the inhabitants of Petersburg and Moscow—that population so recently emerged from the desert that the vices of savage life are only covered over, not exterminated, by the veneer of civilization—even there the creations of Walter Scott are known and appreciated. At home their fame grew more and more, and the author's domestic happiness went on. In 1820 his eldest daughter married Mr. Lockhart, a man even then distinguished for great abilities, and whose name can never now be dissociated from that of his father-in-law, for they must live together in the pages of his splendid biography of Scott—the best and most enduring monument of the genius of both. His son, also, in this year went into the army, the profession which the peaceful poet preferred to every other; and as young Walter was just such a man in mind and person as the father imaged in his heroes—brave as a paladin and strong as an elephant, not over-educated or effeminised by delicacy of feeling—perhaps no career could have been chosen so likely to lead him to distinction. He rose to good rank in the service, and had the reputation of a gallant, honourable man. He was a tremendously big fellow for his age

at sixteen or seventeen—the biggest boy of the school, where there were nearly a thousand admirers of his enormous strength, and sufferers occasionally from his rather tyrannical temper. Many a thrashing have the juniors had to submit to on disputed questions of bat or football; for Walter was not great as an orator, and generally conveyed his opinions with a logical thump on the head, which carried conviction to the dullest mind. At that time he certainly was not brilliant. He did not even study his father's works so carefully as the rest of the boys, and paid the penalty of his neglect in the following way. One of the exercises required of the class was a weekly copy of verses, either in Latin or English, as the author chose. One day some lines were sent up to the master, carefully written out, and signed "Walter Scott." The subject proposed was "Love of our Country," and after some Latin hexameters were examined, the master said, "I have also received a copy of verses which, I confess, are the finest I ever had offered to me as a school composition. Walter Scott, I am delighted with the lines—you wrote them?"

"Oh, aye, sir; I wrote them."

"Did you compose them, I mean?"

"Weel, may be I was helped a little by another laddie."

Whereupon the master read out the magnificent passage in the “Lay of the Last Minstrel”—

Breathes there a man with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my own, my native land.

All the boys in the class knew the lines by heart, and great was the laughter of all, except the unconscious plagiarist, and, probably, the assistant of Walter’s literary performances, who might safely look forward to a handsome remuneration for his treacherous aid in the shape of black eyes and broken nose. No punishment was inflicted for the attempt to deceive, for the master observed that the signature was quite correct, as undoubtedly the author was Walter Scott.

But happy was the father in his two healthy boys and his two blooming daughters, the poet and novelist in the continued favour of the public, and the devoted subject in the approbation—almost the friendship—of his King. George the Fourth, whom some represent as from the beginning a mere selfish voluptuary—a sort of Henry the Eighth of the nineteenth century, without the manly qualities of his prototype of the sixteenth—has great extenuations to plead for the excesses of his youthful days. The habits of the time were not in favour of the quiet and decorum which are indispensable at the present time. Society was then constituted

on the principle of the greatest enjoyment with the least restraint. It may perhaps strike an unprejudiced observer that the Prince, entering life towards the end of the last century, gifted as he was with remarkable personal advantages and uninterrupted health, showed symptoms of far higher qualities in the choice of his companions than his enemies have been willing to admit. He did not look round the peerage and find out some dull and thirsty duke, to make him the comrade of his debauches. Stupid marquises and pudding-headed earls were passed over with disdain; and people of that elevated rank, in the midst of their senseless orgies, considered that he was addicted to low company. But it is a curious fact that the want of name and title in most of his familiars was compensated for by wit, and learning, and eloquence. The friendship he always showed for Sheridan proved that he appreciated the great qualities which almost redeemed that wonderful man from all the failings of which he was the victim. Wherever genius sprang up, especially if it was united with the social qualifications which made the possessor of it an agreeable guest, there was no one so ready as the Prince to recognise it in whatever rank of life it appeared. When Moore came over from Ireland, and bewitched everybody with his sweetness of voice and playfulness

of manner, no time was lost by the heir to the crown in giving him the *entrée* to Carlton House. On these occasions nothing could be more gracious than the manner of the Prince, nothing more grateful than the feelings of the Poet. The gracious manner remained, but a short time saw the adulation of the songster converted into bitter hostility, his cringing bows into murderous lampoons, even the secrecy which should always keep guard over the hours of unreserved intercourse betrayed, and hospitality and condescension repaid with insolence and invective. The Prince might be bad enough—we do not defend him—but he was not worse than many other persons of his time. He had only the misfortune of being placed on such a height that his least proceedings were seen, and at such a distance above the observer that they could not be seen distinctly. But this, at all events, was clear and patent to all, that there was no cordon of exclusiveness drawn round the social circle of the royal reveller. Talent found its way into his private rooms, and such excuse and embellishment as brilliant sayings and intellectual effort could bestow on luscious viands and overflowing cups were not wanting in the symposia for which he was stigmatized. He was not afraid to throw off the armour of his rank, and descend into the arena on equal terms. When he had Moore at

his table, he sang song for song. When Walter Scott, in after years, was a frequent guest at his suppers, he told story for story against the best story-teller of the time, and sometimes left it doubtful which was most successful. As if for the purpose of publicly declaring his respect for genius, he took an early opportunity, after his accession to the throne, of creating the Scottish poet a baronet. This was perhaps intended, and was felt throughout the country, as a compliment to literature itself. From time immemorial court physicians had achieved that rank, and court surgeons administered the bolus under the cognizance of the bloody hand; but no novelist, no historian, no writer (as such), had ever been so distinguished. Sir Walter felt that the honour was equally to be valued by him and his "craft." From that time he was looked on as the recognised representative of literary men, and pointed to by moralist and sage as a proof that genius had entirely changed its nature since the last age; or, rather, that genius had reached its highest point, and was, in fact, nothing else than the glorified perfection of common sense. Before that time it seemed necessary for genius to be combined with eccentricity. When Savage strolled the streets all night for want of a bed, or slept in a glass-house, or by the side of a brick-kiln, for the sake of warmth,

and flung away in low extravagance whatever money he wrung from the pity or admiration of his friends, his dissolute life, disregard of money, and ignorance of the world were taken as surer proofs of his genius than his poems ; the same with Goldsmith, rich to-day and impoverished to-morrow ; the same of Sterne, writing sentimental journeys and leading a disreputable life. It was left for Walter Scott to teach the aspirants after fame that in literary pursuits the same arduous and incessant labour was to be undergone as in any other department ; that a noble imagination, glancing from earth to heaven, from heaven to earth, and “giving to airy nothing a local habitation and a name,” might be combined, and to be highly successful even in its own walk, *must* be combined with a calm, calculating intellect, a cool and vigorous mind. A greater benefit he never bestowed on young candidates for literary repute. Idleness, oddness, unacquaintance with arithmetic, and contempt of the decencies of life, can no longer be taken as tests of anything but deficiency and weakness. The great example of Walter Scott shines before their eyes, a man as methodical as a banker’s clerk, as staid, sedate, and regular as the prosiest of men.

A falling off was perceived in the next two works he published, the “Monastery” and the

“Abbot.” The critics have now ruled that the attempt to introduce the supernatural machinery of the White Lady of Avenel as an active agency in the story was injudicious. The date of her appearance was not put far enough back. Perhaps a witch of wilder nature might have had more congruity of place and time; but so gentle an apparition as the White Lady had never been indigenous among the hills and valleys of Scotland. Some people have objected on the ground of anachronism to the introduction of the “weird sisters” in “Macbeth,” declaring that the English public—whatever might be the case with the sapient witchfinder on the English throne—had no longer faith in such existences when Shakspeare wrote. But this, you will observe, is altering the position of the anachronism altogether. It is not the belief at the time he wrote, but at the date when his incidents occurred, with which the great dramatist had to do. In the wild heath of Fores, in the dark age when the ambitious Thane was spirited on to murder his King, there was no more doubt of the reality of wizards and witches, who could sail in sieves and vanish into the foul and filthy air, and held their dreadful Sabbaths under the presidency of the Archfiend, than of ordinary men and women. But certainly the public in the midst of the

Scottish ecclesiastical troubles were too busy to believe in the visitations of so soft and beneficent a being,—

Like lady from a far countrie,  
Beautiful exceedingly,—

or that, at all events, a denizen of the invisible world would concern herself about so paltry a matter as a tailor's bodkin. The crash of falling abbeys and the thunderings of Maister Knox frightened away for ever the gentler imaginings which had amused the leisure of monks and nuns, and nothing was left after that stormy period but the grim superstition of the evil eye, and the muttered incantations of malicious old crones, who expiated their ugliness, their insanity, and their hatred of the world through the fero-cious perspicacity of James the Sixth.

There was a return to Scott's more level style in "Kenilworth," the next of his publications. It appeared in 1821, and entirely restored him to the favour of the public. Though the scene of the story was entirely English, and a new set of characters was presented, the belief grew stronger and stronger that there was but one man in the world who could pour such an interminable stream of incident and invention into the public ear. A clever young barrister instituted a close comparison between those wondrous works of fiction and his acknowledged writings; and by confronting phrase and manner,

convicted the accused “of hiding two faces under one hood.” His friends recognised in each successive volume anecdotes which they themselves had told him; but never did a wandering gipsy know so well how to disguise a stolen child, to hinder its recognition, as Walter Scott knew how to transmogrify a story so as to keep its point but destroy its identity. When he told anything to a friend, and the friend, after laughing at it, and admiring it, said, “Well, it strikes me to be very like the story I told you last week.” “My good sir,” Sir Walter would say, “it’s the same. All that I’ve done is to put a cockit hat upon its head, and a gold-headed stick into its hand to mak’ it fit for decent company.” Chief Commissioner Adam, one of his greatest friends, told him one day that on his first going to St. Andrew’s to see a Professor there, the aged doctor made him look again and again at a fine old tower. “Till I saw that tower,” said the Professor, “and studied it, I thought the beauty of architecture consisted in curlywurlies, but now I find it consists in symmetry and proportion.” In the following winter “Rob Roy” was published, and there it was written, greatly to the Commissioner’s delight, that the Cathedral Church of Glasgow is a respectable Gothic structure, without any “curlywurlies.”

One day he was riding near home, and heard

a man at work on the road tell another labourer to “whummle” the stones into the dyke. Sir Walter pulled up, gave the man half-a-crown, and said, “You’ve well earned the money. I’ve been seeking for a word for a long time, and that’s just the one I require.” He introduced it with great effect in the “*Fortunes of Nigel*,” and doubtless found it very cheap at half-a-crown. It means “to tumble over all of a heap,” and though very likely only a transposition of the English “whelm,” is very expressive, and most unmistakeable Scotch.

1821.—In this year died the facetious auctioneer, John Ballantyne. Ignorant of his own position to the last, he left his friend and patron a legacy of two thousand pounds. It would have sounded better if it had been twenty, and never been felt by his heir-at-law, for, on winding up his affairs, he was found to be hopelessly in debt. The affection of Scott had never failed, though to his carelessness and blundering it was owing that he had been in such difficulties, and suffered so much loss. When he was buried, one of the truest mourners there was the great author. The sun shone out at the moment the body was laid in the grave. Scott looked up at the Calton-hill, which was glowing in the sunshine. He said to his son-in-law, “I think there’ll be less sunshine for me in the world now

that Johnnie's gone." A good creature, Johnnie, in spite of all his faults. One day, when he was selling some books, he was struck with the worn expression of a young student of divinity who stood among the spectators, but was too poor to buy. He was perhaps too poor even to live, for he seemed weak, and was probably but scantily fed. John asked him if he was in bad health, and when the poor student assented with a sigh, "Come," said the auctioneer, "I think I ken the secret o' a sort of draft that wad relieve you; particularly," he added, handing him a cheque for five or ten pounds—"particularly, my dear, if taken on an empty stomach."

James Ballantyne, the brother, still remained a devoted adherent of the author of "*Waverley*," and printer of all his works. The persons, therefore, with whom Scott had most business transactions now were Ballantyne, the printer, and Constable, the publisher. This was a man of astonishing skill in his trade, as sagacious in detecting the slightest change in popular favour as the wariest pilot in catching a variation in the wind. He catered, therefore, for the public taste in a way unapproached by all his competitors, and has the imperishable honour of being the introducer of that great change in book-selling speculation by which the public secured a literature at once cheap and excellent. In this

he has been followed by Charles Knight, whose services to the million, both as publisher and author, it is impossible to over-estimate,—by the Murrays and Blackwoods, and other recognised potentates of the trade, till the dream of the Edinburgh publisher has been fulfilled to its utmost extent, and the highest works of genius are brought within reach of the humblest means.

The common flower in the Eastern allegory, which said, “I am not the rose, but I have lived near it so long that I smell as sweetly,” was but a faint adumbration of Mr. Constable’s connexion with Walter Scott. Their intimacy grew closer and closer as interest gave its cementing power to friendship. The bookseller criticised the author’s works in manuscript, showed much shrewdness in his remarks, and was a great authority, particularly on title-pages and the names to be given to the novels. Sometimes, when he succeeded in getting his proposed name adopted, his pride and gratification knew no bounds. Scott at one time intended to call one of his books by the name of the character which he thought the principal one in the story. “No, no,” said Constable, “the real hero of the book is Rob Roy, and Rob Roy it should be called.” When Scott agreed to this, the worthy bookseller thought his im-

mortality was at last achieved ; and Lockhart says, that one morning he was heard walking up and down in the full expansion of his glory, and saying, “ By George, sir, I am all but the author of ‘ Waverley.’ ”

It is a pity that the same mania which possessed the publisher, and tempted him to assume the part of the author, got hold of the author in respect of the publisher’s share of the adventure. Experience had not yet taught him the great secret of success in life—the division of labour, and the necessity, as the phrase is, of the ploughman sticking to the plough and the smith to his anvil. His dealings were carried on on a large scale in common, or rather in partnership, with these two men. In reliance on the inexhaustible stores of his invention, he entered into engagements to furnish four full-sized novels at a certain price, no time for their production being fixed, and with unexampled industry finished them all within the year. For these, paid in advance, he drew bills on Constable, at the rate of fifteen thousand a year ; and the public showed no diminution of its taste for any dish he set before it. In entering, therefore, on any fresh expenditure on land or building, he calculated on clearing off his liabilities at the rate of thirty thousand pounds in two years. In case, however, the inconstant public

should grow tired of his fictions, he determined to be prepared with a more solid sort of food, and as early as 1823 he commenced the "Life of Napoleon." But there was no symptom of that. When George the Fourth visited his northern capital, in 1822, it is no exaggeration to say that his reception, when he appeared in public, was very little superior to that of Walter Scott. He walked up the High-street, lined with a hundred thousand spectators, side by side with Sir Robert Peel. There never was such a triumph in the old Roman time, when the conqueror led up his prisoners and spoils to the Capitol. All stood up when the first glimpse was caught of his honoured head, and cheered and clapped hands as he limped past; the great acclamation, gradually taken up as he advanced, and at last dying away as he entered the gate of the old castle. When he appeared again on the ramparts, all the thousands collected below caught sight of him once more, and one great universal shout from the end of Prince's-street to the Calton-hill, and from the first drawbridge down to Holyrood House, showed that the great masses of his countrymen knew how to appreciate intellectual greatness, even in presence of a king. Sir Robert Peel said he never knew till then what was the electric shock of a nation's gratitude.

The English were little behind their northern neighbours in demonstration of their admiration and respect. On some occasion there was a great procession down to Westminster, and both sides of Whitehall and Parliament-street were lined with dragoons. There was no possibility of getting across, and the pavement was so encumbered that it was equally impossible to walk down at the side. Sir Walter was very anxious to get onward to the Abbey. At last he said to a non-commissioned officer: "My friend, would you let me walk quietly down between your lines?"

"Against all orders, sir," said the man.

"I think there's a Scottish tone in your voice," said Sir Walter; "and maybe you've heard my name. I am Walter Scott."

"Are you?" said the man. "Make way, there! Come on, sir; it must be a hard request that I don't grant to Walter Scott." And he carefully guarded him all down the line of soldiers, saying his name at intervals, and dragoons on horseback, and the thousands in the street, cheered him all the way.

In Ireland, when he visited it a year or two later, his reception, as might be expected, was still more noisy and enthusiastic. The Lord-Lieutenant placed everything at his disposal; the University offered him all its honours;

the theatre rose when he entered his box ; and Paddy ran wild all over the country, shouting, and roaring, and fighting with any one that would stand up against him. Some of this acclamation must have been the result of a mere desire to make a noise, and without much knowledge of his claims to public recognition. When he visited St. Kevin's bed, and crawled with some difficulty into a celebrated cave—the first lame man, he says, who ever did so—the woman who acted as guide was told by Mr. Plunkett that she had shown her curiosities to a great man—a poet. Cathleen treated this as a quiz of Mr. Attorney. “Poet?” she said; “divil a bit of it, but an honourable gentleman. He gave me half-a-crown.” But at Limerick he was consoled for this ignorance of his poetic fame by a visit paid to him by a brother bard, a native Irish poet of the name of O’Kelly. O’Kelly was not quite so modest as other great authors have been, for in the lines with which he honoured Sir Walter, the principal place was reserved for himself.

Three poets in three different nations born,  
The United Kingdom in this age adorn ;—  
Byron, of England, Scott of Scotia’s blood,  
And Erin’s pride, O’Kelly, great and good !

The inferior bard, as in the case of Old Timotheus, yielded the crown to his rival ; but

on this occasion, greatly to Mr. O'Kelly's satisfaction, it took the shape of a five-shilling piece.

In this, the last of the gay and prosperous years of his life, his eldest son married—to his entire satisfaction—a niece of one of his greatest friends, an heiress and most amiable woman. Here we see the great author at his climax of earthly happiness and fame. Wealth apparently inexhaustible, and fame unembittered by a single hostile voice. Thousands of pilgrims every year went to the North for the purpose of seeing Sir Walter; or, if that was impossible, at all events of looking upon his house. One English family met with a disappointment in this object from a very curious cause. Sir Walter was the “Poet of Marmion” to half the world; the “Author of Waverley” to more than half; the “Laird of Abbotsford” to the gentry round him; but his legal definition of “Sheriff” was the name he was known by among the humble classes who understood very little of either “Marmion” or “Waverley.” The travellers on leaving Selkirk told the driver to let them know when they came to Sir Walter Scott’s. Accordingly, when they got to the turn of the road beyond Galashiels the man pointed to a house on the opposite side of the river, and said, “Sir, that’s the Shirra’s.” “Indeed,” said the gentleman, care-

lessly, and took no notice ; his wife and daughters were on the look-out for the dwelling of the great enchanter ; and when they arrived at the next stage, great was their surprise and disappointment to find the house of “the Shirra” which they had passed so rapidly was the very goal of their pilgrimage.

But a view of a man’s public position and appearance gives a very incomplete idea of his real character. It is at home he must be seen to be correctly judged. Like kings or great actors, we may admire their dignified performance, but we want to follow them into their retirement, to see how they look without sceptre and crown, and dressed in their ordinary clothes. There is always an inner circle, a ring of familiar friends, in which a man unbends and reveals his actual nature ; and luckily, in Scott’s case, from the ample details given us by visitors and by himself, we have no difficulty in realizing the very scene, and seeing him in his habit as he lived. Foremost in the group of “ trusty freres ” was Adam Ferguson, or, as he was called after his knighthood, in 1822, simply Sir Adam, without any surname being required. For as there was in Europe but one Sir Walter, there was also in Scotland only one Sir Adam. He was a son of the historian of Rome ; a little the senior of his more illustrious comrade, and the

gayest, the most humorous, and best-natured of men. He had served as a soldier in the Peninsular war, and retired with the rank of captain. Such a teller of stories was never heard—not Sir Walter himself; for Sir Adam added a great power of mimicry to his other talents, and whether the anecdotes related to a noble French *émigré* or a strongly-marked Scotch peasant, the individual was endowed with life, and language, and character. And the number of these recollections was inexhaustible. His wit was always ready, and when, in addition to these social qualifications, it is said that he was one of the best singers of Scottish ballads, no more is required to point him out as the very fulfilment of the idea of a boon companion of the loftiest sort; for with all his wit, all his humours, and all his songs, he was a polished and accomplished gentleman, and so admirably chimed in with the humours of Sir Walter, so called out his stores of Border tale or antiquarian research, that no wonder a worthy laird, with whom they spent a night of high mirth and jollity, woke with sore sides next morning, and complained that Sir Adam and Sir Walter, both together, were too much for any company. Sir Adam lived in a cottage in Tweedside, a few miles from Abbotsford, and carried the cheerfulness and kindness of his delightful disposition

into extreme old age. He died only three years ago, having survived his great companion two-and-twenty years. A tall, gaunt man, with weatherbeaten face, and somewhat of a military air, he formed an amazing contrast to the preceptor of the family, who was the great original from which Dominie Sampson was drawn. The same simplicity of character, the same amount of learning and devotion to books, the same love for his youthful charges, and the same incapacity of acquiring any practical knowledge of the world distinguished the Dominie of Ellangowan and the tutor of Abbotsford. In addition to these peculiarities, he had met with some accident in his youth, which reduced him to the use of a wooden leg, and his already strange appearance was rendered still more remarkable by this appendage. To see Sir Walter beating time to the piano was a pleasing sight; but when the Dominie, to the great detriment of carpet and floor, performed the same office with his vegetable prop, the music was sometimes extinguished by its accompaniment; but the worthy man was not to be debarred from his exercise, and kept on thumping in musical cadence long after the tune had ceased. There was also Mr. William Laidlaw, a most excellent, sagacious man, who was manager or steward, though not exactly under that name, to the town-bred and book-learned laird. With

this amiable and respected friend Sir Walter was quite at home. Accompanied by him and Sir Adam, and followed at a respectful distance, but still within earshot, by Tom Purdie, his forester and *factotum*, he would sally forth, axe in hand, to do execution on some too luxurious planting; and the way was beguiled by the sensible conversation of William Laidlaw, or enlivened, as the case might be, by the Sancho Panza-like observations of Tom Purdie, or the more admirable anecdotes of the knight. These formed his home council. With these all matters connected with the land were discussed and settled. Mr. Laidlaw was always consulted about the purchase of any additional territory, and always gave the most excellent advice. Sir Walter acknowledged its excellence, but seldom acted upon it. A few hundreds more were given for some consideration that did not come into Willie Laidlaw's calculation; such as a wider view, or the historic interest of the fields, or the fact that the possession of a certain farm would make him "march" with the Duke. For Scott had the weakness, common to many men of antiquarian tastes, of an overweening admiration of rank and title. To "march" with the Duke, with whom he claimed kindred on the strength of his name of Scott, seemed to bring him one degree nearer in his connexion with his chief.

Though he was too just a man, and, in the main, had too much self-respect to make any serious difference in his treatment of the nobly born and those not so favoured, it was observed that in all external circumstances his behaviour was very much regulated by that standard. The stupidest man in company, if he could boast of some hereditary name, was treated with marked deference, to the exclusion, perhaps, of others who had no such distinction, but were worthier of his attention in other respects. It was as a lawyer, reverencing old usages—as a Border antiquary, devoted to old family traditions—as a poet and novelist, finding his *materiel* in the times of chivalry and romance, that he yielded to this weakness. He saw on the narrow forehead of every inheritor of a title the helmet of the strong-handed warrior who had founded the family, and listened, with bent back and favouring smile, to the merest silliness, if it proceeded from the descendant of some hero of the Crusades. Better to see him exchanging pleasant remarks with Willie Laidlaw and Tom Purdie, or sitting at good men's feasts on terms of equality and ease; for even in presence of Wellington there was no reason why the second place should have been taken by Walter Scott.

But now came the time when the halls of Abbotsford were no more to be filled with the

great and gay, when music sounded no longer, and Sir Adam's merriment was hushed. A sad cloud was impending ; and it will be interesting to watch how the reverse of fortune affects the great Magician, when the fabric he has reared collapses at his side, and leaves him as desolate as old Lear upon the storm-beat heath. The circle of trade proceedings stretched so wide that it embraced the most distant and apparently unconnected parties in its bounds. An actual partnership we have seen existed between Scott and Ballantyne in the printing trade. Ballantyne and Constable, the publisher, were in the habit of favouring each other with accommodation bills. When Constable accepted a bill of Ballantyne's, he took as security an acceptance of Ballantyne for the same amount ; but these counter bills were to be considered strictly as securities, and not by any means as independent obligations. Constable was deeply concerned with a great publishing house in London—that of Hurst and Robinson—and that house, unfortunately, in the year of general speculation, the fatal 1825, took a venture in hops to the extent of a hundred thousand pounds. It shows how strangely commerce in this country is interlaced ; that if the hop speculation had turned out well, Hurst and Robinson would have stood, Constable would have stood, Ballantyne would

have stood, and Sir Walter would have remained at Abbotsford, a prosperous gentleman, to the end of his days. The banking-house in London, on hearing of this wild and unprofessional step of Hurst and Robinson, withdrew their credit; they fell back upon Constable. Constable, under the pressure of distress, but in the certainty that no danger accrued from the act, sent into the market the counter bills of Ballantyne; so that on Ballantyne's bills for twenty-five thousand pounds there was now a liability for fifty. But that is a mere illustrative sum to show the result of these duplicates. The amount was at first unknown, but it turned out to be immensely larger. The crash was universal, and the partnership of Scott with Ballantyne, and Ballantyne's transactions with Constable, made him in reality a sufferer from the debts of both.

All that friendship could do was done when the calamity was known. Men of wealth came forward with offers of aid. The banks offered advances. A generous teacher of the harp offered him all his savings. An anonymous correspondent wrote to place thirty thousand pounds at his command. Sir Walter would not involve another in his loss, but bore the brunt alone. On the 18th of January, 1826, he enters in his journal,—“ I feel neither broken down nor dis-

honoured by the bad—now really bad—news I have received. I have walked my last on the domains I have planted; sat the last time in the halls I have built; but death would have taken them from me if misfortune had spared them. My poor people whom I have loved so well !”

On the 26th, he describes his first appearance in public after the catastrophe was known :—“ I went to the Court for the first time to-day, and, like the man with the large nose, thought that everybody was thinking of me and my mishaps. It is curious to see the difference of men’s manners whilst they strive to be kind or civil in their way of addressing me. Some smiled as they wished me good day, as if to say, think no more about it, my lad, it is quite out of our thoughts. Others greeted me with the affected gravity which one sees and despises at a funeral. The best bred—all, I believe, meaning equally well—just shook hands and passed on.” He soon fitted himself for his fallen fortunes. On the 31st, he writes, having given up all his affairs into the hands of trustees—“ I have now no pecuniary provisions to embarrass me: I feel as if I had shaken off from my shoulders a great mass of garments; rich, indeed, but always more a burden than a comfort.” And here follow the memorable words :—“ I have

known in my day all kinds of society, and can pretty well estimate how much or how little a man loses by retiring from all but that which is very intimate. I sleep, and eat, and work as I was wont, and if I could see those about me as indifferent to the loss of rank as I am, I should be completely happy."

Now that the whole of his transactions with Ballantyne and Constable were to be submitted to the prying eyes of creditors and trustees, it was useless to maintain even in form the incognito he had hitherto preserved. He took the occasion of a public dinner to announce authoritatively that he was the author of the *Waverley* novels—that he had composed them with his own head and written them with his own hand; for the perverse ingenuity of some critics, anxious to be deceived, had discovered that those marvellous works were the production of a joint-stock company, character and wit being found by one and story by another—a partnership of ten or twelve Beaumonts and Fletchers, whose compositions were so welded together that it was impossible to divide them, or to identify the separate contributions. The declaration, however, though necessary perhaps in law, took nobody by surprise. It was like the *dénouement* of a play, where the hero hides himself behind the impenetrable veil of a hat and feathers, and

finally comes forward to the delight of the heroine, and vindicates his identity by gently whispering his name. The audience had known him all the time, and only wondered at the pertinacity with which he had hid himself behind so inefficient a barrier.

When the winding-up took place, it turned out that the debts of the printing firm amounted to the enormous sum of a hundred and seventeen thousand pounds; and though, if he had gone at once into the *Gazette*, Sir Walter's affairs would have been arranged in a short time by the surrender of the existing copyrights and his life interest in Abbotsford, he felt that his honour was engaged in seeing every man receive his claim. He sat down resolutely to the task of writing himself clear. He laid down his establishment, reduced his expenditure to the lowest sum, sacrificed health, and ultimately life itself, in the struggle, but finally succeeded.

The glory dies not, and the pain is past!

How he worked and toiled, all for his creditors' behoof! He wrote "Woodstock" with amazing rapidity, and the "Chronicles of the Canongate" were nearly finished in the same year. But domestic afflictions of a deeper kind were added to his pecuniary cares. His wife died in

May (1826), after a union of nine-and-twenty years. His favourite grandson, also, for whose benefit he wrote the “History of Scotland,” dedicating it playfully to Master Hugh Littlejohn, was pronounced of a very delicate constitution, and verified the sentence very soon. But against all—griefs, and losses, and threatenings of death—he bore nobly up. He went into very humble lodgings in Edinburgh, wrote small articles for *Blackwood's Magazine* for a payment of ten pounds, sent off reviews to the *Quarterly*, and carried on his great works, all at the same time. Why did he submit to all this drudgery, this alteration of position, this retirement from the social life he liked so well and adorned so much? You may have heard his son blamed for not coming forward with a resignation of Abbotsford, and so clearing off the debt with the property on which the money had been expended. The son was not to blame. At the time of his marriage, the estate was strictly entailed on him and his heirs; and the only doubt that ever entered Sir Walter's mind was whether his affairs at the period of the marriage were in such a state as to justify the settlement. But on looking at his resources at the time, it was evident to the assignees that he was in a perfectly solvent position, and none of the most selfish of his creditors entertained the thought that it was

possible on this ground to vitiate the entail. If the choice had been given Sir Walter of immediate death or a surrender out of his family of Abbotsford, he would have preferred the axe or the guillotine to the loss of the lairdship for his descendants. To preserve this—to transmit these acres and that fantastic mansion in a long, uninterrupted line of Scotts of Abbotsford—he toiled at his desk fourteen hours a day, wore out his heart and brain, and all to what end? There is not a Scott of Abbotsford in the world! His sons are both dead, childless; his daughter Anne died unmarried; his daughter Sophia died, leaving two sons. They are now both dead, and the sole representative of the name for which he toiled and struggled so long is a granddaughter, originally a Lockhart, who is married to a Mr. Hope. It is lucky that people cannot look forward to the result of their endeavours. To us who see the sad ending of all his labours, it makes the sight of an old man sinking into the grave from overwork and anxiety a piteous spectacle; such, indeed, as it was *not* to the hopeful, and, luckily unforeseeing, worker and the spectators of his gigantic efforts. To them all these labours were soothed by the prospect of success. Day by day the recovery of Abbotsford, clear and unencumbered, drew nearer and nearer by the strength of his own right hand.

Every work, as it went sounding through the land, whispered promises far pleasanter than fame to the author's ear. His "Life of Napoleon" cleared off many thousand pounds; his house in Castle-street, which he had endeared to himself by the innumerable knickknacks with which he had filled it, and in which he had lived so long, cleared off several thousands more; the "Tales of a Grandfather" added to the accumulating fund; the copyright of the former works also was sold, and the result was, that between January, 1826, and January, 1828, there was a dividend paid to the creditors amounting to forty thousand pounds!

But the end was now at hand. In 1830, after two years more of incessant toil, a paralytic seizure gave warning that the machinery was overworked. Instead of oiling the wheels or throwing them out of gear, he whirled them round faster than ever. The glorious vision of Abbotsford restored grew clearer to his sight, and with his eyes fixed on the great object of his life, he neglected matters nearer home, and, like a swimmer struggling to reach the shore, he disregarded the waves round him, and was drowned in sight of land. A deeper warning fell upon him at the end of the year in the shape of a fit of apoplexy, and it was evident to all, if not to himself, that complete repose was neces-

sary to his very life. Meanwhile another dividend had accrued to the creditors, which reduced the original debt to the sum of fifty-four thousand pounds. These astonishing exertions were appreciated as they deserved. His library at Abbotsford was presented to him by the creditors, as a token of their gratitude for the efforts he had made; and there can be no doubt that if his health had continued, a very few years would have seen the clearing off of all encumbrances. The public saw the failure of his powers before he began to perceive it himself, and the novel of "Count Robert of Paris" showed the last glimmering of the lamp which was about to expire. Paralysis in 1831 was the completion of the previous seizure. When it was at last known that the wand was broken in Prospero's hand, there was a universal grief, as if in every private house a great calamity was near. Condolences poured in from every quarter. But the weakness which was so generally lamented brought its counterbalancing advantages along with it. His mind had dwelt in its strength so entirely on the payment of his debts, that now that the intellect had lost its grasp, the favourite dream of his existence became a reality. He believed he was free from encumbrance, and that Abbotsford was again his own. It was this alleviating hallucination which

enabled his friends to persuade him to unbend for a time from the oar, and even to tear himself away from the loved domain, to try the chances of a warmer climate. Creditors and all joined in respecting this mistake, and no word was ever said in his hearing that could banish the gratifying belief. Under this pleasant delusion his preparations were made in excellent spirits. His daughter was his constant nurse, and his eldest son, a Major in the Hussars, got leave from his regiment to be the companion of their foreign travel. Once more, just as he was about to leave Abbotsford for the last time, the old hospitality revived for a single day. The son of Burns had recently returned from India, and Scott considered it only fitting for the greatest Scotsman of the nineteenth century to show his appreciation of the greatest of the eighteenth. He invited Captain James Glencairn Burns to his house, and had a party to meet him of the few choice spirits within his call. The night was spent with even more joviality than was usual in the days of former state. Burns' songs were sung by Burns' son, and brought tears into Sir Walter's eyes. A poem was composed by Lockhart, which was worthy of the occasion—the first meeting between the descendant of the peasant poet and the knightly bard.

September 18, 1831.

A day I've seen whose brightness pierced the cloud  
 Of pain and sorrow, both for great and small—  
 A night of flowing cups and pibrochs loud,  
 Once more within the Minstrel's blazon'd hall.

Upon this frozen hearth pile crackling trees,  
 Let every silent clarshach find its strings ;  
 Unfurl once more the banner to the breeze,  
 No warmer welcome for the blood of kings !

From ear to ear, from eye to glistening eye,  
 Leap the glad-tidings and the glance of glee ;  
 Perish the hopeless breast that beats not high  
 At thought beneath his roof that guest to see !

What princely stranger comes ? what exiled lord  
 From the far East to Scotia's strand returns  
 To stir with joy the towers of Abbotsford,  
 And "wake the Minstrel's soul ?"—The boy of Burns.

O sacred Genius ! blessing on the chains  
 Wherein thy sympathy can minds entwine !  
 Beyond the conscious glow of kindred veins,  
 A power, a spirit, and a charm are thine.

Thine offspring share them. Thou hast trod the land—  
 It breathes of thee—and men, through rising tears,  
 Behold the image of thy manhood stand,  
 More noble than a galaxy of peers.

And he—his father's bones had quaked, I ween,  
 But that with holier pride his heart-strings bound,  
 Than if his host had king or kaiser been,  
 And star and cross on every bosom round.

High strains were pour'd of many a Border spear,  
 While gentle fingers swept a throbbing shell ;  
 A manly voice, in manly notes and clear,  
 Of lowly love's deep bliss responded well.

The children sang the ballads of their sires :—

Serene among them sat the hoary knight ;  
 And, if dead Bards have ears for earthly lyres,  
 The peasant's shade was near, and drank delight.

As through the woods we took our homeward way,  
 Fair shone the moon last night on Eildon Hill ;  
 Soft rippled Tweed's broad wave beneath her ray,  
 And in sweet murmurs gush'd the Huntly rill.

Heaven send the guardian genius of the vale  
 Health yet, and strength, and length of honoured days,  
 To cheer the world with many a gallant tale,  
 And hear his children's children chant his lays.

Through seas unruffled may the vessel glide,  
 That bears her Poet far from Melrose' glen !  
 And may his pulse be steadfast as our pride,  
 When happy breezes waft him back again !

In the same week the poet Wordsworth came to see his friend. They had known each other long, and the meeting was a sad one. This beautiful sonnet is the result of Wordsworth's grief at the illness of his host :—

A sorrow, not of clouds or weeping rain,  
 Nor of the parting sun's pathetic light  
 Engendered, hangs on Eildon's triple height  
 Spirits of power assembled there complain

For kindred power departing from their sight,  
While Tweed, best pleased in chanting a blithe strain,  
Saddens his voice again and yet again.

Lift up your hearts, ye mourners ! for the might  
Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes—  
Blessings and prayers in nobler retinue

Than sceptred king or laurelled conqueror knows  
Follow the wondrous Potentate ! Be true,  
Ye winds of Ocean and the Midland Sea,  
Wafting your charge to fair Parthenope !

To Parthenope (or Naples) he went. But “they change their climate, not their mind, who run across the sea.” He was looking at Vesuvius and the matchless bay, and thinking of Abbotsford all the time. He went to Paestum and Pompeii, but he could say, like the Highland exile, “My heart’s in the Highlands, my heart is na here.” The Italian students gathered round him with southern enthusiasm, wherever he appeared. At Rome he was fêted as far as his strength allowed ; but before he visited the Imperial City the news of the death of Göthe had reached him : it struck him as a warning of his own. His impatience redoubled, and the fine dream of his recovery vanished at once. “Alas ! poor Göthe !” he exclaimed : “but he at least died at home. Let us to Abbotsford. Grata quies patriæ.” His wish was complied with. He was hurried by gentle stages on his homeward way, and rested for a while in

Jermyn-street. He was now generally in a state of stupor, and even when more awake was unconscious of where he was. Allan Cunningham told Mr. Lockhart that when he was going to his lodgings to inquire how he was, a crowd of working men were gathered in silence at a corner of the street, and one of them, without naming the patient, as if there was only one deathbed in London, asked him, "Do you know, sir, if this is the street where he is lying?"

From Edinburgh to Abbotsford the distance is not great. "He was placed in the carriage, and lay," says Lockhart, "in the same torpid state during the first two stages on the way to Tweedside. But as we descended the vale of the Gala he began to gaze about him, and by degrees it was obvious he was recognising the features of that familiar landscape. Presently he murmured a name or two. 'Gala water, surely!' 'Buckholm!' 'Torwoodlee!' As we rounded the hill at Ladhope, and the outline of the Eildons burst on him, he became greatly excited; and when, turning himself on his couch, his eye caught at length his own towers at the distance of a mile, he sprang up with a cry of delight." Mr. Laidlaw, his true and loving friend, was waiting at the porch, and assisted in lifting him into the dining-room,

where his bed had been prepared. He sat bewildered for a few moments, and then, resting his eye on Laidlaw, said, "Ha! Willie Laidlaw! Oh, man, how often I have thought of you." By this time his dogs had assembled about his chair; they began to fawn upon him, and lick his hands, and he alternately sobbed and smiled over them until sleep oppressed him. Consciousness returned after a little repose. He was wheeled through his garden, and then through the hall, and the large library. He kept saying, "I have seen much, but nothing like my ain house. Give me one turn more."

When still more strengthened, he wished to be read to; and when Lockhart asked him what book he should read, he answered "Need you ask? there is but one." So the Bible was read to him, and the chapter chosen was the fourteenth of St. John, which begins: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."

Three weeks more he lingered, without pain, and with occasional gleams of consciousness in the midst of increasing weakness. At last, on the 21st of September, 1832, Sir Walter Scott breathed his last in the presence of all his children. "It was a beautiful day," says Lockhart; "so warm that every window was wide open, and so perfectly still that the sound of all others most delicious to his ear, the gentle ripple of

the Tweed over its pebbles, was distinctly audible as we knelt round the bed, and his eldest son kissed and closed his eyes."

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,  
Nor the stormy winter's rages;  
Thou thy weary task hast done,  
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages.

When two-and-twenty years were passed, a very similar scene occurred in the same place. Lockhart, the attentive friend and eloquent biographer, then an old man, bowed down with many griefs, retired to Abbotsford when he felt his end draw near. The same causes—the overwrought brain and sorrow-laden heart—produced the same disease. Paralysed, and occasionally unconscious, he lay amid the scenes of his aspiring manhood, when one of the handsomest of human forms had been the fitting casket for one of the most remarkable of human intellects. How he must have recalled, while Memory held her seat, the painful scene of 1832, which he had so pathetically described! And yet he also must have felt the alleviation of dying surrounded by those he loved best, and in the midst of so many things which were connected with the happiest incidents of his life. They both now repose in the old churchyard of Dryburgh Abbey, a place hereafter to be the object of more pilgrimage than was ever the tomb of

saint or martyr ; for there will be no generation of men speaking the English tongue, from whatever remote region they may come, who will not long to survey the scenery which Scott has immortalized as his own, and end by a reverential visit to his grave.

There is little more to add, for we have made a few observations on the different incidents of his life as they occurred. On the whole, we think the reader will agree with us, that Walter Scott may safely be pronounced a great and good man. On his greatness in genius and poetic power we believe all the world is agreed ; for though among some people it is a fashion to say his poems are merely versified novels, and that he did not reach the height other men have attained to, there is no author of any period whose poems retain such hold of the popular mind. Where one person is intimately acquainted with the "Childe Harold" or the dramas of Lord Byron, there are hundreds who know by heart "The Lady of the Lake," and the "Lay of the Last Minstrel." We do not know who can be considered a poet, even a great poet, if Walter Scott may not be. To move the heart, to arrest the attention, even to soothe the ear—if these are constituent portions of the poet's task, surely they never were done to a greater extent by any other man. His versifi-

cation is sometimes careless, for he wrote with great rapidity, under the impulse of a spirit rioting in its own strength; but you might as well find fault with the rough banks and irregular course of a great mountain torrent swelled with rain, and complain that its outline was not so regular nor its waters so smooth as those of a canal. To deny the possession of poetry in its very highest sense to the author of those dashing poems, because it is possible to discover in them some feeble rhymes, or even ungrammatical expressions, is worthy of the sages who should deny military genius to the Duke of Wellington because his fighting soldiers in the Peninsula were not so trimly dressed as certain show regiments at home. The same power and the same immense imaginative fertility are to be found in his professed poems as in his prose works. You are quite welcome to say he is not a sparkling poet like Moore, nor a correct poet like Campbell, nor a philosophic poet like Wordsworth; but take him in his vigour, in his characters, in his incidents, and descriptions—he is worth them all. There is courage to be gained in the manliness of his style; and no man who ever wrote, whether in prose or verse, whether describing the lighted hall of chivalrous nobles, or the simple habits of ordinary life, or the ways and feelings of the lower ranks, no man ever left

such an impression on the reader that he was in presence not only of a man of surpassing genius, but of a **PERFECT GENTLEMAN**; not that this arose from his knowledge of what is called high life, or his possession of the ease and dignity which we call characteristic of lofty breeding; but it proceeded from the conviction that comes upon you as you read that here you are listening to the language of a brave and noble heart—of a man whose mind never harboured one base or dishonourable thought; who, as we learn when we inquire into his life, grudged no sacrifice to fulfil what he considered a duty, and whose ambition, “that last infirmity of noble minds,” led him at last rather to die at his post than suffer any person to lose a shilling by reliance on his word. This is to be a gentleman. This is a race worth running—a reputation worth dying for.

Sound, sound the clarion ! fill the fife !  
To all the sensual world proclaim,  
One crowded hour of glorious life  
Is worth an age without a name !

And this is the moral to be drawn from all we have said ; that Genius requires to be combined with something else—not mere rank or wealth, but with strong energy and “perseverance in well-doing”—to lift a man into the great eminence on which Scott now stands.

No man ever lived for forty years so full in the eye of the public as he did, and left no single spot upon his fame. His life was before the men of two generations; and the old man of the one was the same kind, earnest, unselfish, honourable individual as the youth of the other had been. There is no whisper in all those years of literary jealousies, or even political hatreds. With all the great authors of the time he was on the kindest terms; with Whigs, and all varieties of political opponents, he was as friendly as with his own allies. With lords and ladies he was the pleasantest of companions; and in the cottages of the poor he was a no less welcome guest. If any of you feel the glowings of the poetic fire, turn it, as he did, to high and useful purposes.

But if no poet thou, reverse the plan,  
Depart in peace and imitate the man.

THE END.

LONDON : FARRINGDON STREET,

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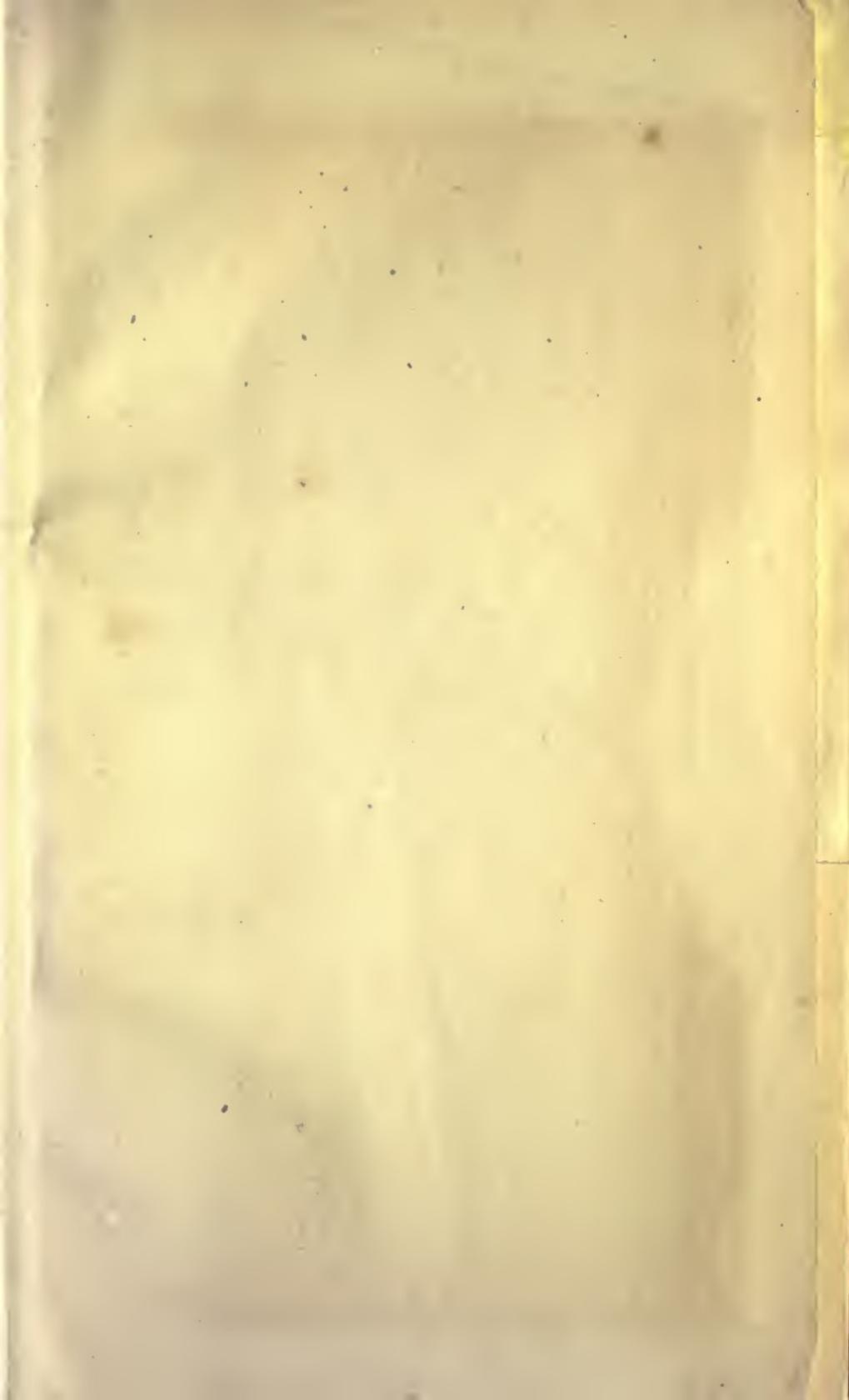
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